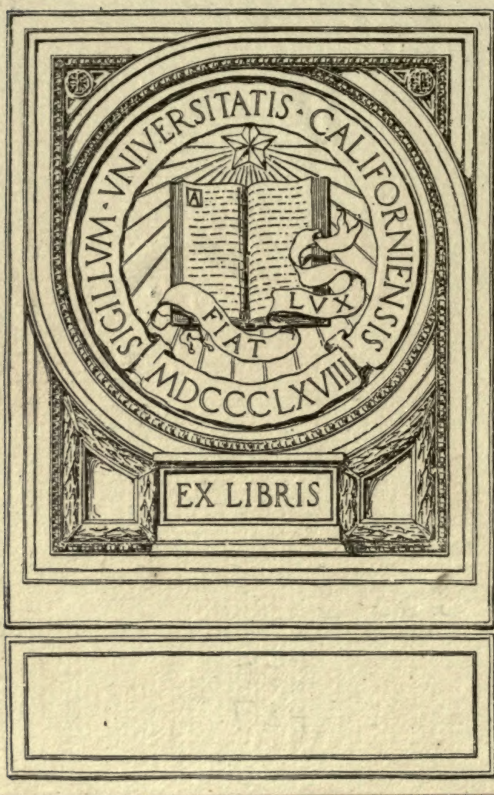




PERSIA  
AND  
TURKEY  
IN REVOLT




DAVID FRASER









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**BY THE SAME AUTHOR.**

# THE MARCHES OF HINDUSTAN.

The Record of a Journey in Thibet, Trans-Himalayan India,  
Chinese Turkestan, Russian Turkestan, and Persia.

*Published by Messrs Wm. Blackwood & Sons at 21s. net.*

**The Spectator.**—".....an uncommonly entertaining book of travels. Mr Fraser..... has the true traveller's spirit. We recommend Mr Fraser's account of his sixty-three hours' task recrossing the Himalaya to those who wish a spirited narrative of mountain adventure. Near the summit of the pass (Karakorum) a murder was committed some years ago, and the story of how the criminal was hunted down over all Central Asia is as good a piece of detective romance as we have read for some time. Not every good expedition produces a good book, but in this case letters are justified of their son. Let us add that the book is printed in a way that is a credit to English publishing."

**The Times.**—".....a fine journey, and its incidents are admirably recounted. Mr Fraser has a good natural turn for vivid description, and writes without effort and often with considerable grace."

**Westminster Gazette.**—"Mr Fraser always writes with spirit and confidence, and there is no doubt about his gifts as a resolute traveller and journalist. How well he can describe scenery that appeals to him is shown in the chapter, vivid and even beautiful, in a glacier near the Saser Pass, by the old road to Yarkand. The glacier has been described by masters of English and men of powerful intellect as well as imagination—such as Tyndall; but we do not know any writer who brings out the personality of the glacier as Mr Fraser does in this chapter. Mr Fraser's is the common-sense view (of the Anglo-Russian Agreement), but it also happens to be the view of an expert and acute and bold observer."

**Athenæum.**—"No other volume with which we are acquainted contains such admirable and life-like representations of Thibetan people. We warmly commend Mr Fraser's admirable work."

**Army and Navy Gazette.**—"We would emphatically commend it to our readers as a book they will appreciate and enjoy."

**Academy.**—"This is a delightful record of a journey. The tale of his travel is told with an admirable sense of proportion.....there is an absence of wearisome detail .....it may fairly be said that among the 516 pages that the book contains there is not one dull page.....evokes some beautifully descriptive writing.....a very fascinating book."

**Daily Telegraph.**—"The book appeals to all classes of men—to the politician, the soldier, the economist, and the anthropologist; but, above all and before all, it will fascinate travellers of the intelligent kind, and that still more numerous body who love travel and adventure; indeed one could hardly imagine a man, or a woman, dipping into this entrancing volume without finding something of uncommon interest."

**Geographical Journal.**—"The conflicting interests of England and Russia are examined with shrewdness and impartiality.....remarks about Persia have a special value and significance. The traveller's diary kept with the eye and pen of a trained correspondent; scenes, scenery, hardships, pleasures, all set forth with much accuracy and no little humour."

**Glasgow Herald.**—"Mr Fraser has done substantial service in presenting to the British public a vivid and trustworthy sketch of the vital problems associated with the Indian frontier."

**Manchester Courier.**—".....this book is a striking contribution to public knowledge. Mr Fraser's general style of writing is cheery and breezy—at times too expressively breezy—while here and there it assumes a poetry and dignity not unsuitable to the sublimity of those magnificent natural features through which his wanderings led him."



**BY THE SAME AUTHOR.**

# **A MODERN CAMPAIGN;**

or, War and Wireless Telegraphy in the Far East.

*A Volume describing the Russo-Japanese War,  
published by Messrs Methuen & Co. at 6s.*

---

**The Times.**—"Mr Fraser possesses in no small degree the sovereign virtue of a war correspondent—the capacity to tell a plain story plainly. His criticism of the military operations are often shrewd and to the point, and what he has to say about the preponderating part played by artillery in this war deserves the notice of experts."

**Army and Navy Gazette.**—"Mr Fraser's narrative is very judicious, and shows a good deal of sound sense in some of the military criticisms. His notes upon the artillery lessons of the war are particularly interesting. This is one of the best books we have read upon the war."

**Standard.**—"In Mr Fraser's book will be read a clear account, told in easy, breezy language, of how the Far East looks in time of war. Mr Fraser makes many pertinent observations, and his book is throughout instructive and entertaining."

**Sphere.**—"Mr Fraser's book is valuable not merely as a war record but as a scientific essay."

**Spectator.**—"Mr Fraser has a roving eye for the comedies of life—his narrative of the battles of the Yalu, the Motien Pass, and Laoyung is the work of a man who understands military operations."

**The Speaker.**—"Mr Fraser's is a workmanlike narrative of the progress of the war as far as it concerned Kuroki's division. It contains much interesting matter about the troops engaged, the people of the country, and the conditions of campaigning, written with a rather laborious lightness. His account of the fortunes of the despatch-boat *Haimun* is exceedingly lively reading."

**Saturday Review.**—"Gives vivid accounts of the battles of the Yalu, of Towan, and of Manja Yama, and of the fighting generally under General Kuroki."

**Scotsman.**—"There are many delightful passages in the book.....there is a fund of quiet and rich humour in the narrative which is always pleasing. The work is altogether one of singular interest."

**Pall Mall Gazette.**—"Mr Fraser's book contains some haunting pictures of this vast and bitter struggle. He has, moreover, a sense of humour which lightens up many of his pages, a keen gift of observation, and a happy faculty of setting down his impressions in vivid language."

**Outlook.**—"The first authentic narrative of Kuroki's campaign which it is possible for a soldier to appreciate.....the work of a modest, efficient, and *bonâ fide* war correspondent."

**Morning Post.**—"Mr Fraser has done eminently well in a field of journalism which boasts such brilliant names as Russell, Forbes,.....and his book gives evidence of all the qualities which the war correspondent must possess as his stock-in-trade—cheeriness, readiness and resource, a sense of humour, and a facility for clear and rapid composition."

**Morning Advertiser.**—"In the book under notice we feel the heavy hand of the adept manipulator of matter for purposes of 'copy.' Mr Fraser's words flow calmly along like the current of some broad peaceful river. He deals with two great battles.....and in neither does he quicken the blood by his description of those sanguinary conflicts.....The way is dry, and it is a long time before we feel we can take any particular interest.....for the average reader this general survey of an extended field of operations will produce a sense of monotony against which it will be hopeless for him to fight.....A third of the book passes gravely away before we arrive at a point of actual interest.....It may be that Mr Fraser is such an old war-horse that the sight of men dying in their thousands is a subject for calm analysis."

**Westminster Gazette.**—"Mr Fraser has a fund of genuine humour which he draws upon as occasion requires with excellent results. Altogether his book is one of great interest."



**BY THE SAME AUTHOR.**

# THE SHORT CUT TO INDIA.

## The Record of a Journey along the Route of the Baghdad Railway.

*Published by Messrs Wm. Blackwood & Sons at 12/6 net.*

**Aberdeen Free Press.**—"Mr Fraser.....has the travelling passion in his blood, and he is a traveller whose gifts of keen observation and of clear graphic statement enable him to put his experiences to excellent account. The present work is one of special value."

**Athenæum.**—"Special interest—personal, geographical, and political—attaches to 'The Short Cut to India.'.....The book throughout is pleasantly written.....whilst the description of the country passed through bears witness alike to the power of observation possessed by the traveller, and his capacity for recording its results."

**Birmingham Post.**—"As a traveller Mr Fraser is delightful; he is full of pluck and full of humour. His encounter with a robber, and the terrible injuries which resulted, would have made many a good man turn back, but handicapped as he was with wounds, illness, and all the abominations of a Mesopotamian summer, he completed his journey, and lived to tell the best story which has been written on the district over which he travelled. 'The Short Cut to India' is the best type of travel work; it is well written, instructive, exciting, and amusing."

**Bookman.**—"If any one wishes to know about the railway to Baghdad, and does not stipulate for actual Blue-books, this is undoubtedly the volume which must not be passed over. Indeed, if any one does *not* wish to know about the railway to Baghdad, this is still undoubtedly the book to read, for not only will it entertain the reader, but it will make him keen in the future about all that concerns, and happens to, and results from the said much-debated railway."

**Daily Chronicle.**—"Of the manner in which Mr Fraser has carried out his task of explaining the inwardness of the Euphrates valley scheme it were difficult to speak too highly. Mr Fraser is filled with the scientific spirit, and imparts to his readers a sense of confidence in his judgment of men and affairs both by his obvious integrity and by giving weight to facts that tell against his main conclusion."

**Daily Graphic.**—"We hardly know whether to praise Mr David Fraser's new book chiefly for its personal or for its political interest. In either case, whether we regard it as the record of a plucky and adventurous journey, carried through in spite of wounds which nearly cost the author his life, or as a first-hand statement of the progress and possibilities of a railway which in certain eventualities would constitute a grave menace to our Indian Empire, the volume deserves to be widely read."

**Daily Mail.**—".....presents facts and theories in a manner that will attract students."

**Dundee Advertiser.**—"In his latest book, Mr David Fraser amply fulfils the promise of his earlier work, and establishes more firmly his reputation as a daring traveller, a picturesque and entertaining writer, and a shrewd investigator of the political, economic, and military problems of Asia....."

**Geographical Journal.**—"Mr Fraser's bright and picturesque volume is a timely reminder that the long-pending question of improved communication between Europe and the East is in speedy prospect of settlement. The author contributes much interesting information regarding the riparian districts, and especially about the project of reorganising the irrigation works in lower Mesopotamia, an undertaking of vast importance."

**Glasgow Herald.**—"Mr Fraser describes his experiences of travel in a simple and graphic style which is never tiresome. The narrative, however, is strictly subordinate to a very good and detailed account of the Anatolian Railway, of the engineering problems that face the Baghdad Railway builders, and of the prospects of the great enterprise. Nothing so complete or authoritative is available in any other book."

**Inverness Courier.**—"A most interesting volume.....Mr Fraser is a journalist of the best type—open-eyed, bright, vivacious, interested in all he sees, and communicating his experiences in a clear and fascinating style."



**Liverpool Courier.**—"In reading the story of Mr Fraser's movements we feel ourselves in the company of a fine, wholesome, worthy representative of our race. As to his literary style, it is admirably clear and vigorous in narration, description, and exposition.....His discussion of the Baghdad Railway project is the most able we have yet seen."

**Liverpool Daily Post.**—"As in his previous book) "We have the same graphic power of description, and a like pungent good-humour amid discomfort and difficulties of no ordinary description. The political, financial, and commercial problems involved in the Baghdad Railway are discussed with fairness and amplitude of knowledge.....Messrs Blackwood are entitled to a word of commendation for the excellent way in which this book is printed."

**Manchester Courier.**—".....his narrative is interesting, modest, and humorous. Keen observation of the incidental details of the journey, graphic memory, and apt descriptive powers have resulted in a picture of the Near East that appears both unexaggerated and original."

**Manchester Daily Chronicle.**—"The reviewer generally lays down a book with a profound sense of relief, but it is no exaggeration to say that one such person at least grieved that the end of this volume had come. The book fascinates from several points of view."

**Methodist Times.**—".....a fascinating volume of travel....."

**Morning Post.**—".....the book can be warmly recommended for the admirable observation, the unflagging spirit, and the political judgment shown by the author....."

**Nation.**—".....the book is brightly written, profusely illustrated by good photographs, and is well worthy the attention of any one who desires to know what is the actual, but terribly unsatisfactory, condition of Asia Minor."

**Observer.**—"In this volume Mr Fraser combines with a happiness only too rare in such books, the romance of travel with the useful and first-hand information of the student.....For some time he was involuntarily an international 'question.' Mr Fraser relates the incident with a charming modesty and simplicity and the humour of his race.....A very delightful book of travel and observation, full of information, told so simply and agreeably that one reads on and on, absorbed as in the thrill of an exciting novel."

**Pall Mall Gazette.**—"Humorous, anecdotal, graphic, the book is to be recommended as much as the author is to be congratulated for the courage which made him pursue his journey in the face of difficulties which would have excused its abandonment. Mr Fraser belongs to the little circle of special correspondents whose work is of value to the interests of the Empire, and his book will undoubtedly enhance his reputation."

**Public Opinion.**—"An arresting book.....written with charming simplicity.....it makes one realise vividly what travelling really means outside the radius of civilised countries."

**Railway Gazette.**—"Those interested in the subject of the Baghdad Railway cannot do better than read Mr Fraser's book, which, in addition to throwing much light on a particularly topical matter, forms a very pleasant and well-written travel-book."

**Spectator.**—"It is safe to say that Mr David Fraser's story of his travels along the route of the Baghdad Railway will be read as widely as any book of the kind that has been published for a long time. Even those who are not interested in the political and commercial questions associated with the Baghdad Railway will find it an engrossing narrative of adventure.....There is not a page in which Mr Fraser loses the attention of his reader. Even when the latter is slightly in revolt he is still an undoubted captive.....We heartily recommend this book."

**The Times.**—".....a most readable book, full of apposite information, and relating experiences of no ordinary kind."

**Times of India.**—"A travel-book of a singularly fascinating nature."

**Vanity Fair.**—"If one is imprisoned in a filthy city office and unable to escape from the jangle and rattle of civilisation a really good book of travel is a godsend. But good travel-books are scarce, for there are few literary ventures which can be bungled so appallingly.....This book is more than merely readable. Despite its occasional defects, it is incomparably superior to the dreary travel-diaries produced nowadays with such depressing frequency."

**Westminster Gazette.**—"Mr Fraser describes the route with keen observation and unflinching cheerfulness.....and discourses vigorously and incisively on the railway question in all its aspects. The volume is most interesting as well as instructive throughout."

**World.**—"It was a happy.....inspiration that prompted Mr David Fraser to traverse the route along which the Baghdad Railway does not yet run, and in 'The Short Cut to India' we have the fruits of it. He has survived.....to write a book which is full of political and personal interest, and should mark its author as a peculiarly promising special correspondent."



Persia and Turkey in Revolt









*His Majesty Mohamed Ali Shah.*

*(A snapshot taken during an audience granted to the Author.)*



*Colonel Liakhoff, Commander of the Persian Cossack Brigade.*



# Persia and Turkey in Revolt

BY

DAVID FRASER

AUTHOR OF 'A MODERN CAMPAIGN,' 'THE MARCHES OF HINDUSTAN,'  
'THE SHORT CUT TO INDIA'

*WITH 120 ILLUSTRATIONS AND MAPS*

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## P R E F A C E.

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LATE one night at the beginning of the year 1909, while I was absorbed in the repulsive task of correcting proofs, the telephone bell at my side rang with sudden sharpness; then came a voice from Printing House Square, and the query was—

“Will you go to Persia for us?”

Things were moving in the country of the Shah, and a quick affirmative seemed the obvious answer. But was it possible to leave all these heaps of trash that meant a book on the stocks? I temporised—

“When do you want me to go?”

The voice gave me no time to think; it spluttered into my ear—

“Immediately.”

Then all at once it seemed as if the only thing in life worth having was to be loosed where the world was stirring. I looked no more at the rubbish heaps, but murmured—softly, that the precious words might not be lost—

“Will the day after to-morrow do?”

And so it came to pass that forty hours later I was crossing the Channel, bound for the Orient by way of St Petersburg.

It was, therefore, as Special Correspondent to 'The Times' that I revisited Persia and spent the stormy year of 1909 in Teheran; and subsequently travelled to the Persian Gulf, then up through Mesopotamia, and across the track of my previous journey, to Syria, halting thereafter, on my way homeward, at many of the principal towns in Turkey.

With the kind permission of 'The Times,' these opportunities I have now utilised in this endeavour to sketch the more prominent features of Persian and Turkish affairs as they appear in Constitutional days.

D. F.

LONDON, *September* 1910.



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# PERSIA AND TURKEY IN REVOLT.

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## CHAPTER I.

### ARRIVAL IN TEHERAN.

PERSIA in the beginning of 1909 was in a highly interesting condition. The Bakhtiari tribesmen triumphantly occupying Isfahan, in Central Persia, were threatening to invade the capital; and if the dark hints of Young Persians exiled in Europe were worth anything, the revolutionary stalwarts defending Tabriz from the assaults of the Shah's troops were about to trample upon their besiegers and to march against Teheran, intent upon the destruction of autocratic rule and upon the restoration of the Constitution. When I left London in the early part of January it was intended that, on arrival in Persia, I should join either the Bakhtiaris or the Revolutionaries in their advance upon Teheran, and take such modest part in subsequent events as circumstances permitted. Having landed at Enzeli, on the Caspian Sea, however, I found that the situation had not developed as expected, and that both belligerents were maintaining a masterly inactivity within their respective

strongholds. It remained for me, then, only to make the abominable journey from the Caspian, and tamely to enter the Persian metropolis in a four-horse stage-carriage. The memory of that fifty-hour drive, over high mountains deep in snow, and in cold that was almost arctic, will not fade in a hurry. The reality was so different from the rose-scented dreamland that is the Persia of one's imagination: there were ugly deserts instead of shady glades, sullen skies instead of golden sunlight, filthy quagmires instead of the echo of dainty quatrains. And yet there is nothing commonplace about the road. Gaunt cloud-hidden hills give place to endless stony wastes touched with lights of ineffable delicacy; files of cushion-footed camels float by in silence broken only by the deep-toned bells of the leaders; rows of heavily-laden donkeys patter past with a solemnity so quaint that one's eyes are loth to lose sight of them; and the absurd clothes of the people, their queer hats, their ancient guns, their complete unconsciousness of being different from the rest of the world, constitute attractions that never seem to diminish in interest.

Study of the situation at Teheran revealed a curious state of affairs both in the capital itself and in the provinces. So far as the city was concerned quiet was maintained by the police, behind whom were the terrible Colonel Liakhoff and his red-handed Persian Cossacks, objects of deep hatred on account of their bombardment of the Mejliss six months before. Behind these, again, were troops to the number of nearly 5000, armed with modern rifles, and believed loyal to the Shah. Their fighting value from the European point of view was almost *nil*, but they were overwhelmingly superior to any incoherent mob available on the Nationalist side. The only danger apprehended in Teheran at





*A Persian Bridge.*



*" . . . cushion-footed camels float by in silence. . . . "*

30. VIII  
AUGUST 30

that period was from the troops. Their pay being hopelessly in arrears, it was feared that they might take the law into their own hands and loot the bazaars, a course which would entail loss to foreign property and danger to individual foreigners. And once out of control it was possible enough that the wild tribesmen, of whom several of the regiments were composed, might turn their attention to the European quarter, which contained a foreign population of several hundred souls. In these circumstances the European community was dependent entirely for protection on the Cossack Brigade under its Russian officers, and nothing could have been less opportune, from the foreign resident's point of view, than the suggestion, made at this time in the House of Commons by a leading member of the Persia Committee, that the Russian officers should be withdrawn from Persia as an indication to the Shah that he had lost the confidence and support of the Powers owing to his failure to keep pledges in regard to the Constitution. The Powers, indeed, would have been very glad to have snubbed Mohamed Ali, but there was no disposition to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with him by a method that deprived their own subjects, and foreigners in general, of the only real guarantee for security.

In the provinces the situation was about as unpromising as it well could have been from the Royalist point of view. At Tabriz the Government troops had failed time after time to capture the city, while it seemed that even their endeavours to blockade the roads and prevent the entrance of supplies were continually being rendered ineffective. Isfahan was in possession of the Bakhtiari and its Governor in sanctuary in the British Consulate. The Bakhtiari threat to march on the capital had never been taken



seriously in Teheran, but the tribesmen nevertheless were supreme in one of the principal centres of the country, while the measures taken to eject them were pitifully inadequate. The handful of troops despatched from Teheran were insufficient for the purpose, and were without the means of getting to their destination. It was obvious that they must halt half-way and obtain even their daily bread at the expense of whatever unfortunate town they happened to be quartered upon. Farther south, the Kashghais, one of the most powerful tribes in Persia, were reported to be contemplating a descent on Shiraz. In Laristan, Abdul Hussein, a turbulent *seyd*, was denouncing the Shah and raising a force in the Nationalist interests. Near Kermanshah the Kurdish tribe of Kalhurs were in rebellion against the local Governor—their usurping chief, one Daoud Khan, being reported to aspire to independence, prompted thereto by a dream in which he found himself wearing a crown. In Mazanderan, on the Caspian coast, Sipahdar, only a few months before second-in-command of the Royalist army before Tabriz, had founded an *anjuman*, or revolutionary club, in support of the Nationalist cause, and was said to be inviting other Caspian towns to join in the movement. Even the lawless Turkomans of Astrabad were reported to be in favour of the Constitutional side. Meshed, Hamadan, and other important places were supposed to be in sympathy with the popular cause. It seemed, indeed, as if the country was only waiting to burst into a blaze of rebellion and anarchy; as if only a leader was needed to co-ordinate all the elements of unrest into an irresistible wave that should overwhelm the old order of things in Persia. My Persian colleague put the matter in a nutshell when he telegraphed to London only a few days before my arrival

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*The Centre of the Universe holds a Salaam.*



*One of the Royal Regiments.*



that the situation was "extremely obscure and pregnant with danger."

Upon the Court party this apparently desperate state of affairs did not appear to have a disheartening effect. Whatever might be happening in the provinces, the Shah was supreme in Teheran, and still possessed all the outward and visible signs of sovereignty. The *salaam*, or levee, as held in Persia, was alone calculated to fill the heart of an Oriental monarch with pride and satisfaction. Seated upon a throne, wearing the Crown jewels, surrounded by the high officers of State and a crowd of courtiers, the Centre of the Universe periodically watched his twenty regiments march past, their twenty bands loudly braying, the while the royal cannon boomed forth a King's salute. It was true that the Court was uncomfortably domiciled in a park outside the city walls, but that was a matter that affected the *entourage* more than his Majesty, who occupied a delightful suite of rooms in a summer-house overlooking a pleasant garden. When the Shah took horse exercise he was careful to avoid the town, remembering the bomb that had been thrown at the Royal *cortège* not long before. That, again, was no hardship, for it was always more pleasant to ride among the gardens outside the walls than in the narrow and dirty streets of the city.

The shoe really pinched only in one place. The Treasury was bankrupt ten times over, and with the provinces in the condition described funds from outside were coming in in ever-decreasing volume. On the other hand, the necessities of the Government were greater than usual. The large force in the capital required at least to be fed, and though it was possible to evade the question of pay it was essential continually to be doing something to keep the soldiers in good

temper. The prevalence of intrigue made expenditure in this direction essential, for loyalty was mostly a matter of money, or of favour of some kind. The country and capital were full of tribes and grandees sitting upon the fence, and their descent upon the right side could only be secured by expenditure, or by appointments that provided opportunities. It was harassing work no doubt for the Shah and his Ministers, but not so difficult as might appear, and possibly not so uncongenial after all. An empty Treasury in the patient East is far from being a hopeless handicap to existence, and there was always property to be sold, jewels to be pawned, courtiers to be squeezed, possibly secret supplies to be drawn upon. When and where the financial devices of an eastern potentate are exhausted is impossible for the westerner to determine; and to assume, because the Government was desperately hard up, that the Shah was near the end of his tether, was to overlook the combined optimism and fatalism which constitute the supreme characteristic of the Oriental temperament. The impudent trick played on the Imperial Bank of Persia about this time illustrates at once the straits of the Government and its ingenuity in supplying deficiencies. The commander of the troops before Tabriz, as a climax to a long series of requests for funds, at last telegraphed that unless money reached him immediately he would be compelled to raise the siege. The Government made desperate efforts to arrange with the Bank that a specie caravan then on the road to Tabriz, and guarded by Government troops, should be diverted to the Royalist camp. The Bank was quite willing, provided the money, plus exchange, were paid in at Teheran, and pending this operation instructions were given for the caravan to halt. Whenever the Government heard that the



caravan was within the grasp of their agent, however, they ceased to take any further interest in the transaction, and never paid in the money. Meanwhile Prince Ain-ed-Dowleh deliberately helped himself to the cash in the caravan in question, and actually impounded two other caravans that arrived shortly afterwards, the whole sum appropriated amounting to £17,000. When the news of these barefaced robberies reached Teheran there was a great rumpus, and the British Minister gave it hot to the Government. The Government were very apologetic, and greatly regretted the unauthorised (!) action of the commander, whom they promised to admonish. But when Ain-ed-Dowleh heard what the British Minister had said about him—the Commander-in-Chief, a Prince of the Royal blood, a grandson of the great Fath Ali Shah!—he was furiously indignant, and laid all the blame on the Government. Eventually the matter was settled by repayment out of the Customs takings in the Persian Gulf, a course which kept the Bank out of its money for over a year. It is amusing to note by the way that when Ain-ed-Dowleh took possession of the Bank money, on the ground that it was urgently required for the troops, his Royal Highness had the effrontery to send one thousand pounds of it into the city he was besieging, and to purchase therewith, from the Bank which he had robbed, and in his own name, a draft on Teheran for an equivalent sum. Many months later, when the siege was over and his Highness back in the capital, the draft was duly presented for payment—long before the Bank had obtained restitution of the amount seized!

Nationalist opinion at this juncture was somewhat incoherent. The vigorous method by which the Shah, through the agency of Colonel Liakhoff and the Cossack Brigade, had put an end to the Mejliiss in the previous



autumn, had warned bellicose Nationalists that there was a limit beyond which it was not safe to go. On the other hand, danger to individual liberty was not imminent, for sanctuary in one of the foreign Legations could always be obtained in time of peril. Much talk was therefore the order of the day, but very little action. It was darkly said that ten thousand armed men were ready to spring forth at a given word, but recollecting the peaceful manner in which the Teheranis had accepted the bombardment of their beloved Parliament—the few who put up a fight hailed from the more virile province of Azerbaijan—it seemed safe to assume that none of the ten thousand would venture out, now that the Government had the situation well in hand. In truth, each of the Nationalists was much too public-spirited to give personal countenance to anything in the shape of a rising, however much he might approve such a step undertaken by other people. A local committee was said to be spreading its net over all Persia, and generally preparing the country for concerted action against the Shah. It was claimed that the Bakhtiari eruption at Isfahan was a direct manifestation of the power of this committee, while every sign of revolt against the Government anywhere in the country was pointed to as proof that the nation as a whole was in sympathy with the Constitutional movement.

In one respect Nationalist opinion was unanimous and emphatic. Russia was regarded as the evil genius of the situation. The Shah was generally looked upon as a poor creature, without character or initiative, and the victim of evil counsellors who were under Russian influence. It cannot be denied that circumstances did a great deal to justify this view, though if the Nationalists had been gifted with clearer political insight they would have realised that the evidence

upon which their suspicions were founded was capable of explanation. It was notorious in Teheran that while Monsieur de Hartwig, the Russian Minister, acted ostensibly with the British *chargé d'affaires* in the matter of joint representations to the Shah relating to the restoration of the Constitution, he habitually spoilt the effect of the joint action in subsequent private interviews with the Shah or his advisers. In a variety of ways, patent to Oriental but frequently overlooked by European eyes, he impressed Persian opinion with the idea that he was hand-in-glove with the Shah, even though he might find it expedient to lecture his Majesty when in British company. M. de Hartwig, in fact, belonged to the old school which only knew the traditional forward policy. He represented the reactionary and military party in Russia which looks with scant favour upon the Anglo-Russian Agreement and all that it implies. Not only did he personally disapprove of the policy of his own Government, but he was constitutionally incapable of comprehending the great strategic and economic issues involved in it. An advocate in the Russian Foreign Office of an aggressive policy in Manchuria, he was cast forth when that policy brought disaster to Russia in the Far East. Appointed to Persia, his great aim became the restoration of Russian prestige in Asia by aggrandisement in Persia, a petty design that brought its own reward. His sincerity in believing Persia entirely unfitted for Constitutional government—in which belief he has many associates of approved understanding—is unquestionable; but having done incalculable harm by encouraging the Shah in false notions of the situation, M. de Hartwig was at last recalled by his Government and replaced by a young *chargé d'affaires*. British interests were now in charge



of an experienced Minister, whose seniority naturally gave him the lead on the numerous occasions on which the two Legations acted in concert. Relations of the most cordial character were speedily established between Sir George Barclay and Monsieur Sabline, and henceforward nothing was ever done by one Legation that remotely concerned the interests of the other without frank consultation. It was indeed a wonder and a happiness to see the Bear and the Lion consort so amicably together.

That might very well have convinced the Persians that Russia had no ulterior motives, and that her policy was in reality one of frank adherence to the British interpretation of the Agreement—non-interference in the affairs of Persia so long as neither foreign life nor property was threatened. British ideas in regard to Persian affairs had been repeatedly expressed in unambiguous terms by those responsible for our policy, and Monsieur Isvolsky had plainly said to me, when I saw him in St Petersburg, that Russia desired the least possible interference in Persia. The best proof she could give of her sincerity was to replace M. de Hartwig. She gave it; and from that moment onward impartial observers were able to perceive the theory of Anglo-Russian co-operation crystallising into practice.

In Persian eyes, however, matters looked far otherwise. Another post was not available for M. de Hartwig, and, though recalled to St Petersburg, he retained his appointment as Minister to Persia. His family continued to occupy the Legation in Teheran, to drive in the Legation carriages, and to appear in public in the semi-state affected by foreign representatives. It was freely stated that he was returning to Teheran, and that the appointment of M. Sabline was



merely a blind to cover prosecution of the old policy. While the official representative of Russia was hand-in-glove with the British representative, unofficial Russians occupying important positions, some responsible to nobody, some responsible to departments other than the Foreign Office, continually encouraged the Shah, directly and indirectly, in the belief that Russia was really with him and that he could afford to ignore what was officially urged upon him. In fact, the whole Russian community in Teheran, with the single exception of the *chargé d'affaires*, was more or less openly opposed to the policy professed by the Russian Government. The insidious suggestion, too, was continually being made that the Government itself was in reality faithful to tradition and was ostensibly furthering the new policy only with the object of throwing dust in British eyes. In these circumstances Anglo-Russian advice to the Shah, urging the reopening of Parliament and the institution of reform, was thrown away, for the Shah was never likely to re-establish the Constitution while he supposed he had Russian support in his opposition to that course.

Nationalists, then, had no faith in official Russian professions. They saw only the encouragement given to reaction by the Russian community, and that the Shah's power was reinforced by the presence of Russian officers with the Cossack Brigade. They had Liakhoff on the brain. They did not realise the silent struggle that was taking place in St Petersburg between the forces of progress and reaction, between the Stolypin Ministry and the old military party. Isvolsky as Foreign Minister had many enemies anxious for his downfall, and was constantly thwarted in his endeavours to clear the situation in Persia. He was just strong enough to recall Hartwig, but not strong enough

to secure his dismissal from the post of Minister to Persia. He urgently desired the appointment to Persia of Monsieur Poklewski-Koziell, then Councillor to the Russian Embassy in London, a personal friend of King Edward, and an active mover in the negotiations which preceded the signing of the Anglo-Russian Agreement. But the matter could not be managed. Instead, Hartwig's connections were allowed to remain in Teheran stultifying official action, while the numerous agents in Teheran of the reactionary party in St Petersburg brilliantly seconded these efforts to maintain the old policy, despite the contrary intention of the Government in power. It must be admitted that the case looked black against Russia, and that some faith was required to believe in her real adherence to the letter and spirit of the Anglo-Russian Agreement. Vindication was to come later, but in the meantime Persian Nationalists were in despair, convinced that Russia was the implacable foe of the Constitutional cause. It heartened them considerably that the Bakhtiaris had taken the field in Nationalist interests, but they could hardly believe that the Bakhtiaris would really do anything while Russia was behind the Shah; and indeed they knew very well that the Bakhtiaris could have very little understanding of their professed aims, and that self-interest must be the principal element in this sudden enthusiasm for representative institutions. Whichever way the Nationalists looked, Russia seemed to overshadow their prospects and to make the realisation of their hopes difficult.

Foreign views on the situation were clearly defined. It was obvious that the Persian Parliament had tried to do too much. It had endeavoured to apply the highly complex and involved methods of modern constitutionalism to a country not only utterly unprepared



for it, but saddled with a bureaucracy to which, from the Grand Vizier at the top to the *gholam* at the bottom, reform seemed to spell absolute ruin. It was to a great extent a self-constituted Assembly, and very far from being representative of the people who were dissatisfied with the existing Government. Conflict with the executive brought about difficulties, which ended in dissensions, which again resulted in the loss of some of the better elements. The Parliament had been at first purely constitutional; it soon tended to become revolutionary. Certain of the revolutionaries were known to be violently antagonistic to the Kajar dynasty. It was clear enough that the Shah could not be expected to favour Parliamentary government which generated hatred against himself, and afforded scope for plots against his life.

Now, the Mejliss was no more, while the Shah himself had lost control of the country. The prevailing anarchy not only affected foreign interests, but threatened the necessity for that active intervention which it was the declared policy of Russia and England to avoid if possible. The two interested Powers were therefore in the difficult position of having to choose between standing aloof and seeing things go from bad to worse, or of interfering when they wished to abstain from interference. Even if they decided to interfere, there still lay before them the difficulty of choosing whether to back the Shah or the Constitutional party. To put power into the hands of the former meant return to the rotten old system that had resulted in the present climax of misrule. To give it to the Mejliss seemed equally unprofitable, for that body had proved itself the most unpractical in the world. The truth was that the winds were loosed in Persia, and that there was no power within the country that could stay them.



How to secure the re-establishment of order without resort to force from outside was the problem. During my visit to St Petersburg, on the way out to Persia, the subject was under consideration by an extraordinary Council of the Russian Ministry, and from what I could gather of the proceedings it appeared to be recognised that neither the Shah nor the Mejliss alone could procure the desired restoration of tranquillity, chiefly because of their desperate jealousy of each other. Were it possible to remove that jealousy, however, it was presumed that both sides would thereafter refrain from fomenting disorder, with the result that an immediate amelioration of the situation would be assured. If the two Powers would give some sort of guarantee in regard to his throne to the Shah, and on the other hand give some assurances to the Constitutional party that the Mejliss henceforward should have a distinct and unquestioned share in the government of the country, it is obvious that a working compromise would be effected. To the compromise value could then be given by an advance of money to relieve the straitened condition of the Treasury. But as neither the Shah nor the Mejliss had given proof of the common-sense which it was essential should be imported into the conduct of affairs, if they were to be given a turn for the better, it was regarded as imperative that skilled advisers should be engaged who would help the executive, and possibly even the Legislature, to confine their efforts within practical limits, as well as constitute some security to the Powers that the money lent would be spent in a manner to secure the desired result. So far as could be judged, official British views of the situation, and of the steps necessary to be taken for its improvement, did not differ essentially from the Russian, except that the Russians proposed

to give money to the Shah to enable him to restore order before convoking the Mejliss, while we wanted to see the Mejliss sitting before any money was given. But there did exist a difference as to whether the moment had yet come for so definite a degree of interference. We were all for allowing the Persians to work out their own salvation, and for not coming in unless the situation became hopeless. The Russians thought the position hopeless already; we were inclined to think matters might right themselves. If we continued jointly telling the Shah to be good, the miracle might happen, and the Shah become amenable. The Russians wanted to take the situation in hand; we, with sublime opportunism, were willing that it should become even more out of hand.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE ORIGIN OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL MOVEMENT.

A BACKGROUND of the history of the Constitutional movement, and of the developments which preceded its birth, is necessary for a sufficient understanding of the situation that existed in Persia. Some such knowledge throws instructive light not only on the value of Persian aspirations but on the attitude of the two interested Powers towards the whole question of the Persian revolution. Certain outstanding facts must occupy duly prominent places in the picture if proper perspective is to be maintained. Principally it should be remembered that the Persians obtained their Constitution almost without effort on their part. Of scarcely less importance is the fact that we British were mainly instrumental in getting it for them, and that but for our assistance they certainly would not have got it when they did. Thirdly, there is the simple fact that Shah Mohamed Ali was able, with Russian help, to cancel—*i.e.*, to bombard out of existence—the Constitution that his father promulgated, and that that help was given not so much because of any inherent Russian dislike to the Constitution, but because the Constitution was a British *protégé*. These points remembered, much that is obscure becomes plain.



Let me discuss them in detail. As regards the first—a revolution is usually the climax of a period of misgovernment and tyranny, when an outraged people revolt and obtain for themselves relief from an intolerable state of affairs. There are, of course, other motives for revolution, but this is the most orthodox, and the one generally attributed to the Persians in the present instance. It is true that there was misrule and some tyranny in Persia when Muzaffar-ed-Din granted the Constitution, but it is equally true that similar conditions have always existed in Persia. Those who have examined the records at the British Legation in Teheran have told me that the continual burden of official despatches for nearly a century is that the country was in such a state of disorder, and misrule so outrageous, that it was impossible for things to go on much longer. Despatches written forty years ago, when Nasr-ed-Din was supposed to be complete master of the country, were couched in language almost identical with that used at the worst period in the present crisis. They told the same tale, tyranny, cruelty, and misgovernment on the one side; disorder, robbery, and rebellion on the other, and expressed the writers' pious horror at such ongoing in civilised times. At the end of 1905 and in the beginning of 1906 there was a good deal of agitation in Teheran, consequent on a struggle between the Grand Vizier of the day and the clerical community. The former was a typical Persian official, unbridled in his lust for riches, and ruthless in his methods of obtaining them. Under Mohammedan law the clergy constitute the only court of legal appeal, and by virtue of their opportunities have always been the principal bribe-takers in the country. So greedy and rapacious a Prime Minister as Ain-ed-Dowleh—the same Royal Prince who appro-

priated the Imperial Bank's money—very greatly interfered with the perquisites of the clerics, thereby exciting their deep animosity. Hence the ground of the agitation mentioned. The demand was for the dismissal of the Prime Minister, and for the constitution of courts of justice independent of the Government—for the restoration to the clerics, in short, of their immemorial privileges. So far, be it noted, there was nothing new in this situation, nor any grievance that had not been of periodic recurrence in previous history. Nor was there any mention whatever of a Constitution, or of reforms which entailed representative government. Nor was there any endeavour by the agitators to use force for the attainment of their desires. Their policy was one of protest, pure and simple, and it was expressed in the time-honoured manner by taking *bast*, and in formulating demands from safe sanctuary.

There were in the situation, however, new elements, though these do not appear to have inspired any greater degree of public remonstrance, or any more extended demands, than had been characteristic of similar movements on previous occasions. The fashion of visiting Europe, set by Nasr-ed-Din, had begun to bear fruit in the shape of young men educated in Europe. Members of the numerous suites accompanying the Shahs in their foreign travels were impressed by the advantage of possessing modern knowledge, and by their own deficiencies in that respect. Considerable numbers of young men were sent abroad to acquire what their parents lacked. The extension of the diplomatic service, consequent upon the new relations between Persia and Europe, tended to facilitate the going abroad of the junior members of the wealthier classes. Perhaps most important was the fact that the means of acquiring modern knowledge were im-



ported into the country, and a few schools and colleges established where less affluent people could secure for their families a fair smattering of the education that was regarded as one of the principal ingredients of European civilisation. And so there came upon the scene, what had never been there before, the Young Persian, in all his glory of facile French, high collars, and cosmopolitan manners. But even he never appears, as yet, to have dreamed of a Constitution.

There was, too, in the situation itself, a feature that had never been present before, and which must have filled all thoughtful men with apprehension for the future of the country. Thanks to Muzaffar-ed-Din, there was now a foreign debt, where in his father's time there had been none. Not only had he spent the large savings inherited from Nasr-ed-Din in 1896, but he had borrowed from Russia, England, and the two foreign banks in Teheran, sums equivalent to a total of nearly five million pounds sterling. For that huge amount there was not a public work of any kind to show. The bulk of it had been spent upon profitless journeys to Europe, on the purchase of quantities of useless foreign trash, and in satisfying the demands of the hordes of blood-suckers who filled the Court. Already the Customs revenue was nearly all alienated to meet the interest on foreign obligations, and there was even talk of another loan, which would absorb the little balance that remained. The new loan would, of course, go the way of others, and be wasted in Europe and dissipated among favourites. Muzaffar-ed-Din's kindly and simple nature had, indeed, greatly endeared him to his people, but seldom, perhaps, has a monarch proved himself, unwittingly though it may have been, so desperate an enemy to his country. But even the knowledge that independence was being threatened by the mort-



gaging of their financial resources does not appear to have touched the Persians very deeply. From the three most comprehensive accounts<sup>1</sup> of the agitation which preceded the granting of the Constitution, all of which differ in important respects, doubtless due to the extraordinary difficulty of obtaining accurate information in Persia, it appears that the principal demand was always for the dismissal of the obnoxious Prime Minister, whose quarrels with the clergy were the root of the trouble. I cannot ascertain that any public protest was ever made against the pledging of the country's revenues, however much it may have rankled, or that any demand was ever made by the agitators, or anybody else throughout the country, for a share in the government. The situation, in fact, had little about it that was heroic, and nothing to suggest the remarkable developments which followed. If the Persians were really at this moment possessed of great aspirations, they were very successful in concealing them, and whatever their ideas may have been they certainly never evinced the intention of shedding blood for them.

The details of the agitation that was proceeding are not material to this narrative. Shortly, they amounted to the mullahs going from one holy place to another and from sanctuary inciting the people. The bazaars of Teheran were closed for a time—the simplest form of political protest in Persia, and of common occurrence—but were opened by order of the Prime Minister. Large public gatherings were organised in support of the clerical grievances, and at one of these a *seyd* (descendant of the Prophet)

<sup>1</sup> Blue-Book, "Affairs of Persia," No. 1 (1909); 'A Brief Narrative of Recent Events in Persia' (Luzac & Co., London), by Prof. E. G. Browne; 'The Times,' 16th July 1907.

was shot. A few others were killed and wounded by the soldiers firing on a crowd. The net result of a period of public disturbance appears to have been a complete victory for the Government. It is very difficult, from the contradictory accounts already mentioned, to follow exactly the course of events, but there appears now to have ensued a period during which the mullahs tried to take *bast* under foreign protection. They were refused admittance to the Turkish Embassy, according to one account, whereupon they wrote to the British *chargé d'affaires* applying for the active assistance of the Legation. Acting under instructions, Mr Grant Duff replied that it was impossible for the Legation to support a movement directed against the Government of the Shah. They next inquired whether in the case of their taking *bast* they would be ejected. To this Mr Grant Duff responded that, in view of the acknowledged custom in Persia, it was not within his power to expel people who took *bast*. The Minister for Foreign Affairs was informed of this application, but no steps appear to have been taken to prevent what followed.

On the evening of the 9th July fifty mullahs and merchants entered the Legation grounds and took up their quarters for the night. They were followed by others in driblets, apparently extending over a long period, for the official despatch reproduced in the Blue-Book states that the highest number was reached on 2nd September, when 14,000 persons were assembled in the Legation garden. Of that number it is safe to say that not one per cent knew the meaning of the word constitution, or indeed had ever even heard it. As they streamed up the Boulevard des Ambassadeurs they were asked



why they were going to the British Legation, and who told them to go. But the only answer obtainable was that they did not know who wanted them to go, or why. They were going, indeed, just because everybody else was going, and because a *tamasha* in the summer-time, when business was slack, in the leafy aisles of the finest garden in Teheran appealed irresistibly to the pleasure-loving Persian mind. Nevertheless a full-blown democratic Constitution was the outcome of this curious situation. Strangely enough, in subsequent travel in remote parts of Persia, I encountered a mullah who happened to be in *bast* in the British Legation at the time, in connection with a totally different affair. He had seen the whole business from beginning to end, and was himself thereafter an ardent Nationalist. He said that the people were enjoying themselves very much in the Legation grounds, and did nothing but talk and laugh and eat and smoke all the day. I asked if they were not interested in the political situation, and he replied that they weren't at all until the word *mashruteh* (Constitution) was used. Then somebody began explaining its meaning, whereupon interest was aroused and spread throughout the crowd. Thereafter *mashruteh* was in every mouth; and as the people began to understand the meaning of this blessed word, they suddenly realised that it represented the one thing needful for Persia, the grand panacea for all their ills. To substitute government by the people themselves for the tyranny of autocracy seemed the greatest thing in the universe. The democratic idea was conceived, born, weaned, and grown to full manhood in less time than it takes to make a suit of clothes, and henceforward there was universal demand for a Constitution.

*Wonderful!*

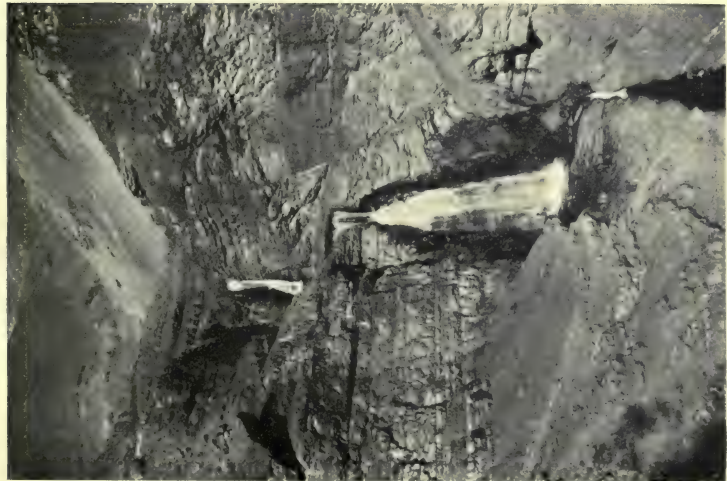
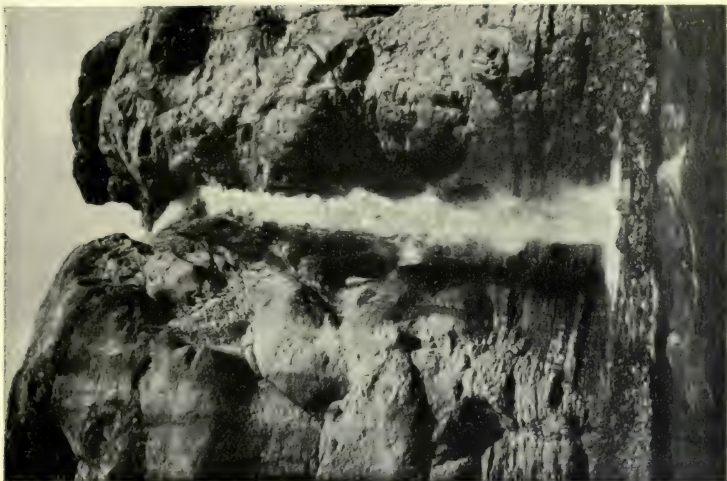


Mr Grant Duff acted as intermediary between the *bastis* and the Government; his only hope of getting rid of the people who had ruined his garden—it was done in the most orderly and considerate manner possible—was to help them to settle their differences with the powers that were. No great difficulty was experienced. A short time before, Muzaffar-ed-Din had been struck down by paralysis, and was even then on his deathbed. He was not fit for business, and only wanted peace. Besides, the Mejliss, or Parliament, which the people demanded—from sanctuary, be it remembered—was a common enough institution in Persia, and was frequently summoned both in the capital and the provinces to discuss affairs and give advice. That the Shah understood the full significance of what was required is far from clear. By agreeing to their demands he thought to please the people and to escape from a dilemma, without realising the extent to which he was divesting himself of his most important prerogatives. The *bastis* desired British guarantees that the Shah's promises would be fulfilled; but these, naturally, were not forthcoming. Whereupon a deadlock ensued, towards a removal of which the Government requested the assistance of Mr Grant Duff. Eventually a meeting took place between the Government and the popular leaders, at which the British representative was present, whereat a decree, granting a National Assembly and Courts of Justice, was drawn up by mutual agreement. This being duly issued, the *bastis* were satisfied, and left the Legation, whereafter the movement entered upon a new phase. But the final bargain between the Shah and the people had been concluded at a meeting suggested by the British representative, and held in his presence; and though

Mr Grant Duff took no part in the discussion except when questioned, the implication was that the British Government was sponsor to the arrangement and morally responsible for its observance. In reality we were no more so than is Mr Roosevelt for the due observance of the terms of the Peace of Portsmouth; but in the East they regard things differently, and the Persians thereafter, in all matters relating to the differences which led them to seek sanctuary with us, regarded us as their natural protectors. And they interpreted the relationship to mean, henceforward, that they were protected by Great Britain from the consequences of anything which they had said and done, or might say and do, against their own Government.

No sooner had the matter been settled and the great *bast* over than the usual Persian difficulty arose. A whole week was spent in gradually paring down the promised concessions, whereafter a rescript was produced in which the original project for a Constitution was hardly recognisable. The hated Prime Minister, who had been hovering in the offing during the course of the negotiations, suddenly returned. The Shah refused to sign the Regulations for the Assembly. Great excitement ensued, and the Fourteen Thousand notified our representative that they would again take refuge in the Legation, if necessary by force, unless he did his duty. Much expenditure on telegrams resulted in the British and Russian Ministers being instructed by their respective Governments to make representations to the Shah on the subject of his promises to his people. These representations had their due effect, and the Royal signature was forthwith affixed to the necessary documents. The incident is noteworthy, for it gave opportunity for the

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manifestation by the Russian Government of a totally new spirit as regards Anglo-Russian relations. Russian co-operation with us on this occasion was, in fact, one of the earliest expressions of the *entente* which took material form twelve months later by the signing of the Anglo-Russian Agreement.

Despite the friendly action of the Russian Government, however, it must be observed that the part played by the British diplomatic representative in Teheran as mediator between the Shah and his people created a profound impression upon certain sections of Russian opinion. British and Russian rivalry in Central Asia was usually focussed in Teheran, and at times had given rise to bitter feelings between the officials of either country. Between subordinates throughout Persia, indeed, suspicion and dislike, with few exceptions, were usually entertained. Opportunities for obtaining petty diplomatic triumphs were eagerly sought and continually exploited. It is not worth while inquiring who was principally to blame—indeed, circumstances were to blame, and not individuals at all. It is sufficient to remark here that throughout a long period of years the Russians had scored one victory after another over us, and that our influence and prestige throughout the north of Persia, and practically everywhere except on the littoral of the Persian Gulf, had ebbed almost out of sight. The reason why is plain to see. In pursuance of the forward policy Russia had set herself deliberately to absorb northern Persia. To this end she had spent money like water in financing the Government and in artificially stimulating her own trade to the detriment of ours. To the power of the purse thus acquired she added that of the sword, by constructing roads from her own into Persian territory, at three strategic points, thereby making available

against Persia the armies of the Caucasus and Turkistan. We were averse to spending money in Persia, and the long desert routes between the Gulf and the Persian capital precluded the possibility of our employing force. Diplomacy in these circumstances was an edgeless weapon, and if ours was weak and watery in those days, it was through no fault of our representatives, but because of the false policy which thought to maintain a strong position without the power to assert it. The weakness of our position, so far as action in Persia itself was concerned, was perfectly apparent both to the Persians and the Russians, and in their disregard for us the former for years had treated us with scant respect, ignoring our interests and flouting our blandishments. The Russian, in fact, was top dog.

And then, suddenly, it seemed as if the power in Persia was to slip from the hands of the autocracy which Russia had spent so much money in suborning, into those of a democratic *régime* hating Russia and leaning upon England. Local Russian opinion immediately attributed the situation to a Machiavellian British plot to recover long-lost ascendancy. We were supposed to have engineered the Constitutional movement from start to finish with the sole object of destroying Russian influence and uplifting our own. In any case it was a check to the forward policy, for liberal government in Persia would entail resistance to Russian aims. England and Englishmen were the heroes of the moment, Russia and Russians the villains.

Exactly how the whole situation arose is difficult to ascertain. In the very beginning we thought nothing of the movement which culminated so remarkably, for the same sort of unrest had always been chronic. So we discouraged the *bastis* who proposed to honour



us with their presence. The staff of the Legation being away in the country, however, a few took refuge without leave, and when they increased in number we began to take an interest. And then, as the number kept growing and growing, and we could not very well stop the influx, we began to realise that our sudden popularity constituted a pretty dig at Russian supremacy in the hearts of the populace. And if from irresponsible quarters there ensued a little sly encouragement to the multitude to enlarge itself, who shall say that the motive was not human, and sporting, and comprehensible? That our people in Teheran foresaw the far-reaching consequence of what was being done, or that our Foreign Office ever realised the full significance of what was happening in Teheran, cannot be supposed. But the Russians were clear on the point. They saw, what was patent to all observers, that the success of our *protégé* meant the loss of Russian influence in Persia and the establishment of British instead. For that reason every Russian in Persia, as well as the reactionary party in Russia which professed the forward policy, became the bitter enemies of the reform movement, and thereafter fought tooth-and-nail for its defeat.

Subsequent developments, therefore, have to be followed with an eye upon these three salient features of the situation. A movement with unimportant beginnings expands out of all proportion owing to adventitious circumstances. Fostered by an outside influence, it grows with hothouse rapidity. And because of the source of the artificial stimulus there arises a blight which later on fixes upon the plant and almost succeeds in killing it altogether. To express it in another way: the movement, as I read it, would never have got so far as to extract constitutional

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privileges from the autocracy were it not for the safe basis of operations afforded by sanctuary in the British Legation, together with the assistance given by the British representative, and the fact that the Shah was physically not in a condition to resist pressure. Nor do I think Russian enmity to the Constitution obtained would ever have become so acute as it ultimately did, were it not that the concession had been obtained principally through British agency, and for that reason, according to tradition, was doomed to hostility.

## CHAPTER III.

## EARLY DAYS OF THE CONSTITUTION.

No sooner had he signed the Constitution than Muzaffar-ed-Din lay down and died. The document was read out in Parliament on New Year's Day 1907, and, according to the three narratives which I have been following, was received with tremendous enthusiasm. It happened, however, that I was travelling in Persia at the time, and was privileged to be present upon this historic occasion, and I must say that I formed the opinion that the acclamations were pitched in a very moderate key.<sup>1</sup> That, however, is a matter of taste, for enthusiasm is a relative thing, great or small, according as viewed from the standpoint of the strenuous West or of the phlegmatic East. Prior to the signing of the great document, however, the Mejliss had been assembled for three months, and had already achieved remarkable results. The extraction of the formal charter of its liberties from a reluctant Court was alone a notable performance; besides which Anglo-Russian financial assistance was refused, the principle of founding a National Bank approved, and a strong anti-foreign feeling developed. How admirably, too, from the very beginning, the Persians had apprehended

<sup>1</sup> See 'The Marches of Hindustan,' by the present writer.



the Parliamentary idea will be realised from the words of Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, the new British Minister, who wrote<sup>1</sup> to Sir Edward Grey, in reference to the Mejliss, that "any member may speak on any subject, and a conclusion is rarely arrived at." The democratic spirit which informed the new Assembly may be gathered from the fact that the members sat on the floor surrounded by the crowd, and that "the public . . . are allowed to interrupt and even to speak."

On 19th January 1907 Mohamed Ali was crowned Shah, eleven days after the death of his father. It is significant of the importance which he and his Court attached to the Mejliss that none of its members, officially or privately, were invited to attend the coronation. Within ten days of this event Sir Cecil Spring-Rice wrote<sup>2</sup> that the prospects of a good understanding between the Shah and the popular party were still remote, and that relations had steadily become worse. He blamed the Government and the Assembly equally for this unfortunate situation, and freely anticipated the possibility of conflict. He recorded also the growth of anti-foreign feeling and the birth of a fear of combined British and Russian action. Europe was now being interested by the prospect of an Anglo-Russian *rapprochement*, and there was talk of the division of Persia into spheres of interest as an item among the terms of a possibly definite arrangement between the two countries. These ideas were duly echoed in Persia, and confirmed the suspicion aroused by the offer of the joint loan. Russian prestige had stood at zero since the triumph of the reformers, but there was now a slump in British popularity. Indeed the leading feature of the reform movement, in the spring of 1907, was the

<sup>1</sup> Blue-Book, Despatch of 3rd January 1907.

<sup>2</sup> Blue-Book, Despatch to Sir Edward Grey, 30th January 1907.

development of intense jealousy of everything and everybody foreign, irrespective of nationality. This feeling reached its climax in the end of February, when the Mejliss procured the dismissal of the two principal Belgian officials of the Customs Department, of whom Monsieur Naus had become very much too big for his boots, and well deserved his fate. The various non-Islamic elements of the population suffered some persecution, and many Chaldeans from the west left the country, while considerable numbers of Jews emigrated to Palestine. Parsis were murdered, without punishment being inflicted on the culprits. Parties in the Mejliss were violently divided on the subject of religious equality, the clericals loudly maintaining the necessity for the maintenance of Mohammedan supremacy. A prominent divine of Isfahan, and a champion of the new movement, went so far as to suggest that Europeans even should be forced to adopt habits and customs more consonant with the respect due by them to Moslems. It was a *seyd* of Shiraz, however, who most aptly epitomised the Persian idea of liberty. In a fit of enthusiasm this worthy man raced down a street shouting "Long live Freedom," punctuating his cries by sticking his knife into the scholars of a Jewish school.

The Persians, however, were delighted with their revolution, and never doubted their complete orthodoxy in the matter of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. They experienced for the first time in their lives the intoxication of political independence, and they took to politics like ducks to water. Blissfully ignorant of affairs, the members of the Mejliss developed an interest in the details of administration that has never been surpassed even in St Stephen's. Paget, M.P., found his apotheosis in Teheran. Deputies went about



poking their noses into every corner, ordering the police to do this and that, instructing the public in their duty to neighbours. Governors of distant provinces were jumped about like chessmen on a board, and strong men of the new constitutional sort sent to put things in order. The most extraordinary confusion ensued. In sympathy with events in the capital, many of the provincial towns formed little Parliaments of their own, with the object of promoting the new principles of government. These councils completely overshadowed local executives and dislocated the machinery of government. Glorious sentiments were exchanged with Teheran by telegraph, and altogether provincial enthusiasm quite equalled that of the capital. Nevertheless the outlying centres would take no orders from Teheran, and flouted the new Governors sent for their betterment. They appointed their own Governors and conducted their own affairs. Needless to say, they interpreted the new order of things principally to mean immunity from financial liability to the central Government. They collected as much money as they could for local purposes; but that was precious little, for the people also interpreted events to imply freedom from liability. Not only, therefore, was the old system of tyranny and extortion suddenly abolished, but it was succeeded by a state of indiscipline under which each man did what he liked and paid nothing. Self-government in these circumstances was deeply appreciated and the prestige of the Constitution rose sky-high.

Meanwhile there arose in Teheran a Press that for unbridled licence in the discussion of things and people could not have been rivalled. Vituperation was its strong point, and the heights attained in the abuse of Shah, Government, Parliament, politicians, rival



publications, and finally private individuals, were calculated to shame the Yellow Press of the most civilised countries. Foreigners have from time to time said many hard things of Persians, but no outsider has ever said of them such unmerciful things as appeared daily in the Teheran papers. These animadversions, however, were not taken very seriously, for it was well understood that unprincipled persons in power, and out of it, used the Press to blow their own trumpets and to blast the reputations of their rivals. Teheran, indeed, without adventitious aid from interested people, could not possibly have supported so many publications. But the Teheran papers, and their many imitators in the provincial towns, penetrated far into the country districts and were widely read. Many little villages had their learned men who spent much of their time spelling out the news to interested circles of listeners. Some shook their heads at the criticisms of the Shah, all were attracted by the scandalous revelations regarding their betters in the capital; but it would be hard to say how many stolid countrymen were fired by the exhortations to patriotism and the better life which appeared side by side with the garbage. The establishment of numerous secret societies, commonly called *anjumans*, was another influence for evil. The *anjumans* became all-powerful in the capital, and in reality dictated to the Mejliss. Being formed of irresponsible persons apt at intrigue, the *anjumans* in their effect on the situation constituted a sort of Tammany in which corrupt motives were the mainspring. Ostensibly established for the promotion of constitutional aims, these societies became instruments for the gratification of personal spite and revenge, and for the collection of money by threats, besides being revolutionary, if not anarchistic, to the core. Ending of the

Kajar dynasty was, notoriously, the aim of their more extreme members.

The Shah's point of view is not difficult to attain. He disliked the movement from the beginning, and later on found himself stripped of power and made the butt of the populace. He developed a great and bitter hatred of the Mejliss, of the Constitution which it embodied, of the individuals who were his opponents. His Prime Minister<sup>1</sup> was assassinated, threats against his own life were frequent. It was natural enough that he commenced to intrigue against the Mejliss. Tools were ready to hand. The mullahs, as things advanced, found themselves losing sympathy with a movement that threatened a divorce between secular and clerical government. The troops, hitherto friendly to the Mejliss because they hoped to obtain their back pay through its agency, soon discovered that nothing could be done for them. A little ready money from the Shah settled their allegiance for the time being. Disorder in the provinces was easily stirred up by judicious expenditure, and the blame was attributed to dissatisfaction with the new style of government. Each side fomented disturbances with the object of discrediting the cause of the other.

Meanwhile the Shah's intrigues and the foolishness of the Mejliss were having their due effect throughout the country. One of the troubles of Persia is that most of its mountainous regions are inhabited by nomad and semi-nomad tribes of turbulent and lawless character. These wild people were usually held in check by the policy of setting tribe against tribe and chief against chief. What the Persian lacks in resolution is made up for in craft, and the Government had generally been successful in controlling within reason-

<sup>1</sup> The Atabeg Azam, shot 31st August 1907.



able limits these disturbing elements. The tribesmen understood that they were regarded in Teheran as troublesome children, and they maintained their reputation by continual acts of disobedience, followed in due season by remorseful submission. It was a great game in which the Shah never over-harassed his faithful subjects, while the subjects themselves knew better than to go too far. Behind the diplomacy of the Government there was always the whole power of the Empire, a poor enough thing in itself, but overwhelming when employed against a single tribe. Now, however, the dangerous effect of the mushroom Press of Teheran was being reflected among the tribes, while the weakness of the central Government, due to the conflict between the Shah and the Mejliss, was becoming apparent in the flabbiness of local government. Disorder rose to the surface and there was no strong hand to suppress it. All the tribes of southern Persia became restive, partly because the provincial governors had lost their power, and partly because Nationalist emissaries had urged them to rise in the sacred cause of the Constitution.

Throughout the year 1907 the situation in the provinces gradually went from bad to worse. Isfahan, Shiraz, Yezd, Meshed, and Kermanshah, besides many other less important places, underwent periods of lawlessness, during which authority was completely set at naught. Trade was paralysed by the occupation of the caravan routes by organised bands of freebooters, among whom the Bakhtiari were conspicuous. Several cases of robbery of Europeans took place, and the Imperial Bank manager at Shiraz was fired at, and narrowly escaped with his life. Consular servants were beaten on several occasions, and consulates shot over as a sign of disrespect to their occupants. In



Teheran a French woman was murdered in her own house, and cases of rough treatment of Europeans were numerous. The Government proved incapable of enforcing respect for its own representatives or for foreigners, and seldom was able to inflict punishment where it was due. So far, however, there had arisen no definite movement in favour either of the Shah or of the Constitution. Disorder was purely the result of loss of power by the central Government, and had very little political significance. What seemed so extraordinary to the European onlooker was that in the total absence of authority there should be so little bloodshed and so few disturbances of a violent character. Anarchy was supreme, yet the country on the whole seemed little removed from its usual tranquillity. In similar circumstances a Western state would have been steeped in blood and swept with fire and sword; but the Persian took things very quietly, thereby showing the peaceable stuff of which he is made. The Mejliss meanwhile was proving itself powerless to do good, and Sir Cecil Spring-Rice<sup>1</sup> wrote on 15th August that "it has done, and is doing, nothing of practical value," while Mr Marling,<sup>2</sup> the new *chargé d'affaires*, on 8th November found the political horizon more threatening than ever, and could "scarcely see a single ray of light to promise better things," despite his opinion that the Nationalist Cabinet "probably represents all that is intellectually best in Persia."<sup>3</sup>

Relations between the Shah and the Mejliss reached a crisis in the middle of December. The Shah having declined to accede to a request for the dismissal of certain reactionaries, the Cabinet sent in their resignations on the 14th. Next day the Ministers were

<sup>1</sup> Blue-Book, Despatch to Sir Edward Grey.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, dated 6th December.

summoned to the Palace, where, immediately on arrival, they were arrested. The servant of the Prime Minister, Nasr-ul-Mulk, an Oxford graduate and a G.C.M.G., ran to the British Legation and reported that his master was to be executed in a few hours, whereupon Mr Marling sent the Oriental Secretary to interview the Shah. The Shah disclaimed any intention of injuring Nasr-ul-Mulk, who, along with the rest of the Ministers, was allowed to leave the palace in company with Mr Churchill. All were extremely frightened, and believed themselves narrowly to have escaped death. Nasr-ul-Mulk went off post-haste the next morning, protected by Legation *gholams*, and hardly stopped to breathe until he was safe on European soil. Meanwhile the Mejliss appeared to be completely cowed by the action of the Shah. The militant Nationalists who, armed to the teeth, bravely defended the Parliament House in time of peace now showed no signs of life, and the Shah could have occupied the buildings if he had wanted, and there and then ended the Mejliss and resumed his powers as an autocrat. Whether it was that he did not mean business, and had not really intended the execution of the Ministers, or that his pusillanimity was just as great as his opponents', and he merely lacked the nerve to do what he wished, cannot be said for certain. In any case one perceives a lack of determination in all concerned. The Shah proving irresolute, and the British intervention on behalf of the Ministers having hardened Nationalist hearts, the Baharistan garden, which contained the Parliament House, and the adjacent Siparsalar mosque, were "slowly" occupied by armed members of the *anjumans*, until by night there was said to be assembled 3000 armed men ready to defend the Mejliss.<sup>1</sup> To make a

<sup>1</sup> Blue-Book, Mr Marling's Despatch of 31st December 1907.



long story short, no fighting took place, and the Shah eventually gave way all along the line, agreed to dismiss the obnoxious reactionaries, and himself swore a bloody oath on the Koran to be faithful to the Constitution.

The Shah's first attempt at a *coup d'état*—if it really amounted to that, which is not quite clear—having failed, the Mejliss was given a new lease of life, and conducted itself so as to call forth, six weeks later, the official criticism that its proceedings “have been even more irregular and purposeless than usual.”<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to know the opinion of the British representative on the spot at this time in regard to the Constitutional movement, and of the Assembly which it had brought forth. While Mr Marling recognises the duplicity and incapacity of the Shah, and his ceaseless endeavours to obstruct and embarrass the Mejliss, he writes in no uncertain terms of the patriotism of the members of that body and of their capacity for good. His despatch to Sir Edward Grey, dated 2nd January 1908, is a damning document and an astounding commentary on the situation. I cull the following paragraph relating to the Mejliss:—

But it is also ignorant and corrupt. There is probably only a small minority of the Assembly who are sincere in wishing for reform, or have anything but a vague idea of what it would imply; and though some of these, such as Taki Zadeh, carry great weight in the Assembly, the ignorant majority of deputies are often swayed by five or six powerful and self-interested members who really guide the work of the House. Of the corruption, a single instance will suffice. Large sums have been collected, mostly by indirect menace from those suspected of reactionary leanings, for the foundation of the National Bank, and lodged with one of the Vice-Presidents of the Assembly. Of this money, which may have amounted to as much as £50,000, no account has been given. It may have been expended in payments of wages and salaries; it is, however, currently said to have been quietly absorbed by the members of the Assembly and *anjumans*. Should this be true, with dishonesty such as this, and with self-interest and

<sup>1</sup> Blue-Book, Summary of Events for January 1908.



mutual distrust rampant, there is not much to be hoped for from the Assembly as it now exists. Nor is it likely, also, that a new election would result in the return of better members. The fact is that Persia is not yet, and will not for a couple of generations to come, be fit for representative institutions.

The two last sentences are specially to be commended to the notice of the reader, for they will go far to justify the suspicion which has doubtless been forming in his mind, that the identification of British policy in Persia with a Nationalist or Constitutionalist movement was something in the nature of a blunder. We are sound enough on this subject in regard to India and Egypt, where education is much more advanced and where individual capacity is much greater. It is curious that we have shown such a mistaken estimate of the situation in Persia, and supposed that good could have come from the putting of such very new wine into such very old bottles. The Continental onlooker is quite satisfied in his own mind that our support of the Constitutional movement was meant as a master-stroke of diplomacy for the rehabilitation of British influence in Persia, as opposed to Russian; and some go so far even as to believe that it was the situation so created in Persia that forced Russia into signing the Anglo-Russian Agreement. But we, who understand our own weaknesses better, know very well that the mistake was made unwittingly, and because we were rushed by circumstances into action the consequences of which we did not foresee.

On 28th February a determined attempt was made upon the life of the Shah, but was not successful, as the would-be assassins threw their bombs at his empty motor-car, instead of at the carriage he was occupying. The Mejliss promptly congratulated his Majesty on his escape, but regret was openly expressed in the city that

the attempt had failed. During the spring there was a lull in the disorders throughout the country, though official reports denied the existence of any real improvement. Popular dissatisfaction with the Mejliss began to grow, for its failure to improve the situation, and the patent fact that it was being exploited by self-interested parties, caused a revulsion in public feeling. Business, in fact, was being conducted in the most ludicrous fashion, Ministry succeeding Ministry without effecting any change for the better. By many the opinion was general that another crisis was impending, and when early in June the Shah made a sudden exit from the palace within the town and took up his quarters in the Bagh-i-Shah, outside the city walls, it was generally supposed he was hatching plans for a *coup*. The Nationalists were also busy, and a commission representing all the *anjumans* elaborated a scheme of defence. Thousands of armed men rallied round the Mejliss, and the whole neighbourhood was transformed into a military camp. Merchants subscribed large sums for expenses and declared themselves ready to fight to a finish. The value of these preparations may be estimated by an incident which occurred on 11th June, when 25 Persian Cossacks brought a warning from the Shah that force would be used if the Mejliss did not immediately procure the dispersal of the Nationalists, whereupon the thousands of armed men hurriedly complied.<sup>1</sup> By the 19th Nationalist courage was somewhat restored, and on the 22nd the Mejliss, once more surrounded by eager defenders, decided to send an ultimatum to the Shah. The initiative was taken by the other side, however, and early the next morning the city was

<sup>1</sup> 'The Times,' 15th June 1908.

startled by the roar of cannon and the sound of heavy firing.

Events from the Nationalist point of view were tragic. They, poor people, were passively in occupation of their beloved Mejliss and the neighbouring mosque when the Shah sent the brutal Liakhoff with 1000 Cossacks and heavy artillery to bombard them out of existence. The enemy began by firing a volley which killed about a dozen Nationalist volunteers. Only then did the Nationalists reply, whereafter shrapnel and shell were poured in upon the defenders until all were slain, taken captive, or put to flight, while Mejliss and mosque were reduced to ruins, fighting covering a period of eight hours. So runs Professor Browne's account, derived from first-hand information collected from Persian refugees in England. That the Professor was misled by his Persian friends is suggested by the Blue-Book version,<sup>1</sup> which gives quite a different impression :—

The first shot was undoubtedly fired by the people in the mosque and Assembly. . . . I believe that every preparation had been made to clear the mosque by force if this proved necessary. In any case the Shah had reasonable ground for taking strong measures, as the attack was made by the popular party on the troops ;—

and omits all mention of damage to Mejliss buildings or mosque.

The facts of the case so far as I could gather are as follows : In the early morning a small detachment of Cossacks were sent by the Shah to the mosque to arrest certain individuals. They were refused entrance, and sent back word to this effect. Large Cossack reinforcements now arrived, accompanied by six field-guns, men and artillery being posted in scattered

<sup>1</sup> Mr Marling's Despatch to Sir Edward Grey, 25th June 1908.



positions commanding the Mejliss and the mosque. It is inconceivable that these manœuvres were intended to be other than a demonstration before which the Nationalists would melt away, for the positions taken up were fatal in the event of fighting, while the Russian officers did not accompany their men, and only arrived in carriages when the force was already on the scene. While the dispositions were being made the Nationalists suddenly opened fire, and appear to have killed and wounded about 40 Cossacks at the first outburst. The Cossacks immediately bolted for cover, leaving Colonel Liakhoff and his Russian officers and non-commissioned officers alone in the square facing the Mejliss. One of the Russian officers then coolly charged, trained, and fired the first gun, whereupon the men returned to their posts. In a few minutes the affair was ended and the Nationalists decamped. A few shells crashed into the Mejliss, and a few more bounded harmlessly off the massive dome of the mosque, splintering the tiles only at the points of impact. So far as I have ever been able to discover, no Nationalists, owing to the safe positions from which they fired, were killed in the brief fight that took place, though stray bullets accounted for a few non-combatants. The Cossacks, however, were badly mauled, twenty men being killed outright. The Parliament House was then gutted by the soldiers, as well as a few private residences. The Russian officers showed complete fearlessness, and it does not detract from their courage that the Nationalists had agreed beforehand, whatever happened, that no Russian should be touched, in view of the danger of bringing about Russian intervention. The handful of Nationalists belonging to the Azerbaijan *anjuman*, who alone fought, showed dash enough to open the ball, and without support could not have been ex-

pected to do more than they did. As for the legions who swore to defend the Constitution with their lives, the less said about them the better—nobody ever expected that they would.

Fears of a conflagration in the town were speedily averted by the action of the Cossack Brigade, which, under Liakhoff, retained complete control of the situation. Only the few houses belonging to marked people were allowed to be touched, and the Shah's soldiers, who were eager to be let loose, were disappointed of the booty which they regarded as their right. Needless to say, there was a scramble for the Nationalist leaders, and thirty were captured, of whom two were strangled. Others gained the safe sanctuary of the British Legation, thereby causing extreme disappointment to the Shah, and giving rise to a situation that, though hurtful to British pride, was not without a touch of humour. During the days immediately following the *coup d'état*, Nationalists in hiding continually broke cover and made a rush for *bast* in our Legation. We took them in because we could not very well help ourselves. But the Shah was furious to see his prey escaping, and surrounded the Legation with troops that did their work so well that not even eggs and milk were allowed to pass in at the gates, much less human beings. This insulting state of affairs lasted for several days, when a telegram<sup>1</sup> to the Shah from King Edward, threatening measures for vindication of the honour of the flag, had the desired result of raising the siege. The humorous aspect of this affair requires some development.

Ever since the signing of the Anglo-Russian Agreement in the previous autumn the British and Russian representatives had been alternately warning, advising, and scolding the Shah. The Russian Government had

<sup>1</sup> Blue-Book, page 134.



agreed to back up the British in insisting that he should fulfil his promises to his people. Any steps that the Shah had taken in the desired direction were due not to his own volition, nor to any force exerted by the Nationalists, but purely and simply to the exhortations of the two Powers. These exhortations, as we have seen, had been productive of very little, and the reason, of course, was that the Russian Minister was giving one counsel to the Shah in public and a totally different one in private. Jointly and publicly the two representatives urged conciliation on the Shah, singly and secretly M. de Hartwig advised patient obstruction. The Shah's *coup* of December went off half-cock because he was acting on his own account. In June he was successful because he had Russian support. The handful of Russian officers, commanding a comparatively organised body of men in the shape of the Persian Cossack Brigade, were more than sufficient to turn the scale in the Shah's favour, and it was to them alone that the Shah now owed success. It was no part of the Russian officers' work to interfere in internal politics, and their action was subsequently disavowed by M. Isvolsky. But Hartwig pulled the strings and the officers danced, with the result that the Mejliss and all pertaining to it were wiped out of existence, and Mohamed Ali become an autocrat like his ancestors before him. He had boasted that his fathers had won their throne with the sword, and he now had the satisfaction of seating himself thereon after the manner of his forebears, and by the aid of the same weapon. It did not detract from his satisfaction that the sword was not his own but a Russian one! But the Shah was only a puppet; the real victor was Hartwig, and the vanquished were—the British. It was an ample and complete triumph of the side which had the sym-



pathy of every Russian then in Persia, and a knock-down blow for the side with which the British were identified. M. de Hartwig could not conceal his satisfaction, and his manners to his colleagues thereafter were insufferably patronising. The British name went down to zero, the Nationalists regarding us as broken reeds, while the Royalists freely trampled upon us. Not only was our Legation completely surrounded by troops for several days, but one of the Shah's principal generals expressed himself willing to take artillery against it, and himself to fire the guns, so that we might be forced to give up the refugees. For this situation we had the Russians alone to thank. Colonel Liakhoff was made Governor of the town immediately after the *coup d'état*, and there is no doubt it was with his and M. de Hartwig's cognizance, if not by their actual orders, that the British Legation was treated with such indignity. For apology, however, we had to look to the Persian Government, and there ensued the edifying spectacle of the Russian Minister—the real instigator of the insult—solemnly supporting, by order of his Government, our demands for reparation.

With the exception of one place the country took the Shah's *coup* quietly, and indeed there appears to have been a good deal of relief at the disappearance of the Mejliss, so discredited had it become in its later days. The Teheran *anjumans* vanished like pricked bubbles, and the flamboyant Press was utterly blotted out. The Powers made it clear to the Shah, however, that they would not tolerate recriminatory measures against the Constitutionalists. Representation had the effect of inducing the Shah to promise another Mejliss, and to grant an amnesty, the latter applicable to all political offenders, even those in refuge in the British Legation, a few of whom, however, it was required

should travel abroad until their sins were forgotten. The refugees gave Mr Marling a great deal of trouble, for though he had arranged the amnesty, and provided them, by agreement with the Persian Government, with papers stating them to be under British protection, they utterly declined to leave the Legation. Persuasion and argument were employed daily and hourly by those members of the staff most gifted with logic, but without avail, and it was only when brute force was threatened—which came rather ungracefully on the top of the logic—that the intruders were got rid of. The six leaders were extremely loth to leave the country, and actually demanded that the Shah should give them an allowance to live on during their absence from Persia. These patriots, however, who had for months preached the deposition and killing of the Shah, were in the end persuaded to go—the Shah paying their expenses! An honourable exception was Taki Zadeh, who declined to take a penny of the Shah's money, and who loyally supported the Legation staff in the efforts to induce the refugees to depart.

Meanwhile Colonel Liakhoff used the authority vested in him to good effect, and Teheran was reported quieter by day and night than it had been for many months previously. Tabriz, on the other hand, was plunged into uproar by events in the capital, and there immediately commenced that long farcical struggle between Nationalists and Royalists which has played such an important part in the development of the Persian Revolution. Throughout the country the Shah's victory gave pause to the forces of disorder, but it was soon discovered that the hand of the Government became no stronger, whereafter the provinces reverted to their previous condition of insubordination. Not long after Mohamed Ali's assertion

of himself over the Constitutionalists, his brother monarch in Turkey was compelled by circumstances over which he had no control to grant to his subjects what the Shah had just snatched away from his. The event caused little stir in Persia, for at the time all the politics had been knocked out of the Teheran Nationalists, while those in other parts of the country, always excepting Tabriz, took no interest in any affairs but their own. Money was the great difficulty of the Shah, for he had none, while the Powers would not give him any except on terms that he would not accept. Russia and England, in pursuance of their policy of non-interference in Persian affairs, continued busily to advise the Shah, one Minister slyly obliterating in the evenings the good effect of what he and his British colleague had said in the mornings. M. de Hartwig's subtlety, however, was acting prejudicially to the good understanding existing between the two Governments, and he was recalled to St Petersburg in the middle of November.



## CHAPTER IV.

## THE UNREST IN PERSIA.

HAVING sketched the genesis and progress of the reform movement in these two chapters, and in the opening chapter dealt with the situation that existed in Persia at the time of my arrival in January 1909, I now propose to outline in more or less narrative form the series of events and the succession of phases which culminated in the *coup d'état* of July of the same year. So far I have laboured under the disadvantage of discussing matters of which I have small personal knowledge, except as relates to a short period in the winter of 1906-7, when I was travelling in Persia and paid a short visit to Teheran. Hereafter, however, I write with such degree of authority as may be allowed to an eye-witness whose business it was closely to follow developments. There is room, it must be admitted, for much diversity of interpretation of these developments, particularly in regard to those of purely Persian aspect. It was always possible to arrive at a fair understanding of occurrences in which the Powers were involved, but where events happened independently of them conjecture necessarily played a large part in European endeavours to comprehend. Owing to the intellectual

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*Interior of the Royal Palace at Teheran.*



*Exterior view of the Palace grounds.*



subtlety and unpractical minds of the people, probably in no country in the world is the acquisition of accurate information so difficult as in Persia; and it is a feature of diplomatic work in that country that events are continually happening of which no adequate explanation is forthcoming, and of which a clear understanding will probably never be attained.

Teheran, then, in the beginning of 1909 presented an interesting psychological problem to the European observer. At one moment it seemed that nothing could avert an immediate explosion, and the next that disturbance of the peace was unthinkable amid such tranquil and even lethargic surroundings. A morning spent in Nationalist company led one to suppose the city in a state of electric tension which the smallest event would transmute into active revolution. But a drive or ride along the streets, followed by a quiet talk with old residents, forced one to exactly the opposite conclusion. According to the latter the state of political excitement said to prevail among the people was almost purely imaginary, the fact being that the people were indifferent, and the excitement confined to a small section of the community, which, for lack of a better word, may be termed Young Persian. And from the Young Persian, the experienced seemed quite convinced, no action could possibly emanate. But as the educated classes with whom foreigners almost exclusively came in contact were practically all red-hot Nationalists, there was communicated to Europeans no considerable degree of alarm. The German Minister went so far as to issue instructions to his nationals what to do in event of disturbances, while one or two other Legations laid in stocks of supplies as a precaution in case they might be forced to provide pro-

tection for large numbers of refugees. The British community, among whom were many with Indian and Oriental experience, took things more philosophically, and I do not remember meeting any of my own countrymen who believed an outbreak imminent. Various Russian and German newspapers, however, were inundated at this time with predictions by local correspondents of violent revolution in which a massacre of Europeans figured prominently, with the consequence that fond relations at home were greatly exercised for the safety of their friends in Persia. A dangerous period was supposed to be the Mohammedan festival of Mohurrem, on the tenth day of which religious fervour usually runs high and is occasionally productive of isolated acts of fanaticism. It was a frequent threat—whence originating was never clear—that a few Europeans might be murdered with the object of provoking foreign intervention. The truth is, however, that feeling never really ran high enough to prompt an outrage so foreign to the peaceful and benevolent nature of the Persians, and the critical moment passed quietly.

The first important event to occur after my arrival was the advent of Caucasian revolutionaries at Resht. A batch of these worthies dropped apparently from the clouds, and commenced operations by foully murdering the Governor in cold blood. Armed with bombs, Mauser pistols, and the latest pattern rifles, and followed by an ever-increasing throng of town roughs, they next attacked the Government offices, killing several of the few soldiers on duty. Brief news to this effect reached us in Teheran by the private telephone of the road service, whereafter all connection was cut and communication made impossible. Considerable anxiety as to the safety of the



European residents was felt, particularly as the Russian Consular guard numbered only ten Cossacks. In the absence of full details the greatest excitement arose in Teheran, and the belief seemed to be general that a large army was marching upon the capital, and that the Bakhtiariis would immediately make a corresponding move from Isfahan. It was soon realised, however, that nothing of the sort was happening, and that the Revolutionaries, indeed, were quietly settling down at Resht and maintaining good order in the name of the Constitution. The Government, of course, were greatly perturbed, and immediately despatched troops to the scene of the outbreak; but it is a quaint commentary upon the situation that the force had to halt a few miles outside the city for lack of funds, and did not really march until several days later. To overawe Teheran itself several regiments were paraded and posted about the town, a precaution that proved sufficient to deter the Nationalists from anything in the shape of active sympathy with this new development.

For nearly a month comparative quiet reigned throughout the country, a few towns peaceably proclaiming themselves for the Constitution, among the number Meshed, where a few Caucasians had arrived to give the inhabitants a lesson in revolutionary tactics. During this lull I was vouchsafed the honour of an audience with the Shah, whom I was considerably surprised to find in excellent spirits and full of humour, despite the reports that he lived in constant fear and trembling. His Majesty, who received me alone but for an interpreter, speedily gave me a new impression of his situation. He began by saying that he was glad to know that 'The Times' had sent a representative from England, where many erroneous ideas as to



his attitude had been disseminated. He next proceeded to explain his position, and in a few sentences made it clear that he possessed a sensible and logical view of the situation according to his lights. He recounted the principal events of the previous two years, and pointed out how grossly many of the Constitutionalists had abused their liberty, both with regard to himself and by interference with the executive powers of the Government. It was evident that his Majesty associated a representative body with anarchy of the worst kind, and recollecting the severe strictures passed upon the Mejliss by many of the Nationalists themselves, one could not but appreciate this view. I gathered from the tenor of the Shah's remarks that so long as he was able to scrape together the funds necessary for existence from day to day, it was unlikely that he would act upon the advice already given him by the two Ministers, or even upon that of the two Governments, then supposed to be pending, or make any concessions which, in his opinion, would be disastrous to the country. His Majesty professed great regard for his people, and declared his intention of initiating reforms and granting a limited form of Constitution whenever order was restored. Mohamed Ali, indeed, talked like a book, and although, no doubt, his tongue was in his cheek most of the time—what great man's is not, when he opens his heart to the Press?—I was constrained to believe that he was not without reason. What the poor man lacked seemed not so much common-sense as knowledge of the world. Surrounded by sycophants from his youth, brought up in complete ignorance of modern developments, and inheriting reins of government already rotted, Mohamed Ali would have been a wonder if he had been able to hold his own. Unen-

cumbered and well advised, I venture to think he might have pulled through; but the Constitutional movement had attracted all the better and more advanced men in the country, and left at his side only the ignorant and corrupt who feared reform. Nor must it be forgotten that, as already explained, Russian agents had forcibly helped him over one stile, and were even then secretly supporting him in his attitude of obstinacy. Well and disinterestedly advised, he would have put himself at the head of the popular movement. So miserably had the first Parliament failed to justify its existence that he might easily have dominated a second by himself initiating moderate reforms, and proving to the Powers that he was worthy of support. He might, indeed, have remained as absolute in Persia as the Czar remains in Russia, the while his Mejliiss learnt, as the Duma is now learning, its functions in the machinery of government.

Events in the north now began to be reflected in the south. That holy man, Seyd Abdul Hussein of Lar, had long been stirring up the people of Fars to join the righteous cause, and with such success that quite a number of lawless tribesmen were attracted to his standard. These gentry took Constitutionalism to mean what the Redskins understand by the war-path, and very fine adherents they speedily proved themselves to be. Their first public exploit, not counting several months of highway robbery and murder, was the capture of the port of Bunder Abbas and the annexation of the Custom-house, both solemnly effected in the name of the Constitution. The prompt arrival of a British man-o'-war detracted somewhat from the picturesqueness of the proceedings, and nothing particular happened. There next followed the rise, at Bushire, of Seyd Morteza, a disciple of the other Seyd,



and a greater patriot than his master, if that were possible. Morteza brought with him a thousand riflemen from Tangistan and occupied the town, not forgetting the Custom-house. Now, the Tangistanis are a byword all over Persia for turbulence, and their appearance in the sheepfolds of Bushire created a great stir. The foreign Consuls immediately flew to the British Resident and demanded measures for the protection of foreign life and property. But the local Nationalists, by force of the divine fire within them, proved themselves masters of the situation, and before their gentle glances the ferocious Tangistanis became as lambs. In these circumstances it was sheer brutality that brought a gunboat and a cruiser upon the scene, especially when the Teheran Nationalists gave assurances that their brothers in the cause would assuredly protect foreign interests.

Meanwhile Morteza in the Custom-house was happy as a king, annexing the receipts and ignoring communications from the Resident pointing out that the revenue was pledged to the British. In this connection our Government gave a delightful exhibition of the humanitarianism which is its especial attribute. Major Cox telegraphed:<sup>1</sup> "Seyd Morteza is a fanatical half-educated Mullah . . . the Persians, whether Nationalists or others, have no faith in the personal integrity or *bond fides* of the Seyd . . ."; to which Sir Edward Grey<sup>2</sup> replied that "it should be impressed on the Seyd that his Majesty's Government attach very great importance to the regular payment into the Imperial Bank of a monthly instalment on account of the interest due on British loans which are secured on the Bushire Customs revenue." At this high treat-

<sup>1</sup> White-Book. Persia No. 2 (1909). Despatch of 29th March 1909.

<sup>2</sup> White-Book. Persia No. 2 (1909). Despatch of 30th March 1909.



ment the Seyd graciously agreed to place the receipts in the Imperial Bank, to the credit of three trustworthy Persians, pending an equitable arrangement by which he could take whatever was required for the upkeep of his army, and the British could have the balance. With that proposal we appear to have been content, although the situation so affected trade that there was no prospect of there being any balance of receipts after the Seyd had helped himself.

The inevitable soon happened. The Tangistanis broke loose and commenced looting the bazaars and terrorising the inhabitants, many of whom took refuge in the foreign Consulates. Goods belonging to British merchants were plundered, and altogether a dangerous situation suddenly arose. Seyd Morteza took advantage of the confusion to arrange with the three trustworthy Persians for the withdrawal of the Customs receipts from the Bank, and never afterwards could be induced to part with them. This Gilbertian situation was finally ended by the landing of a hundred blue-jackets and the evacuation of the town by the Tangistanis without the firing of a shot. Nationalists in Teheran were considerably chagrined by the behaviour of their allies in the south, but showed themselves so unappreciative of practical politics that they actually questioned our right to interfere, and bitterly resented the landing of a force. It might be mentioned that before Major Cox took action he gave warning to the provisional authorities, and only landed the bluejackets when Seyd Morteza repudiated responsibility for the maintenance of order, when his ultimatum to the local Nationalists met with no response, and when the situation had become materially worse.

Teheran meanwhile was not without its emotional moments. One of these occurred when the police

arrested three men on the alleged ground that they were carrying bombs. One was immediately strangled and the corpse suspended in a public gateway, where, next day, the townspeople flocked to see the gruesome sight. It was announced that the other two would be similarly dealt with on successive days, but before that occurred it transpired that the first victim carried a paper which implied the protection of the British Legation. That made for trouble to the Persian Government, and the outcome was an undertaking that there would be no more executions without a proper trial. The Nationalists were emphatic in declaring that the charge was bogus, and a mere excuse for murdering an individual who had incurred the Shah's displeasure. There was a great deal of talk at the time about bombs, and while it was quite possible that the men arrested were actually in possession of such things, the probabilities are that they were innocent. In any case, the man hanged was known to be taking a prominent part as intermediary between leading Nationalists and persons in sanctuary for political reasons, and his fate gave many schemers against the Government a considerable fright.

Still greater consternation was caused not long afterwards by a quadruple murder at a village a few miles from Teheran. Three of the victims were said to be mullahs who had recently deserted the Shah's side and gone over to the Nationalists, and who, fearing for their safety, had gone to the shrine at Shah Abdul Azim to take sanctuary. It appeared that the party had been unable to obtain quarters actually within the precincts of the shrine, but had deemed themselves safe in an adjoining house, as the whole village is generally regarded as being inviolable. In the middle of the night, however, a large party of Teheran roughs

# THE CITY OF CHARTERS



*The Boulevard des Ambassadeurs.*



*" . . . the townspeople flocked to see the  
gruesome sight . . . "*



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with blackened faces arrived and climbed over the roofs until they came to the house containing their intended victims. Surrounding it they knocked at the door. One unfortunate fellow who was left for dead, but who eventually was able to describe what happened, related how the people inside realised their danger so soon as the knock was heard, and endeavoured to escape. On showing themselves at the windows, however, they were fired upon. The murderers eventually broke into the house and killed four of the inmates, completely riddling their bodies with revolver shots and disfiguring them with sword cuts and dagger thrusts. This ruthless outrage created great dismay in Nationalist quarters, for it was obviously inspired by political motives and executed by the myrmidons of the Court, probably with the direct cognisance of the Shah, though this was never proved. Indeed, so far as I am aware, no inquiry ever took place, although the two Legations urged upon the Government the necessity of punishing the culprits. So great was the terror inspired by this deed that it was freely predicted that the Shah would next attack the Turkish Embassy, where some two hundred and fifty persons had been in *bast* for several months for political reasons. From this safe refuge the *bastis* were busily engaged in intrigue and the Shah was known to be itching to get at them. The Turkish *chargé d'affaires* applied to the Porte for a guard, and also urged upon the British and Russian Legations the necessity for demanding the dismissal of certain officials believed responsible for the crime at Shah Abdul Azim. Like so many occurrences in Persia at the time, however, this one was soon overlapped by another, and everybody's attention directed elsewhere.

The condition of the southern roads now began to

attract some attention, for within a period of three weeks no fewer than three British subjects were stopped and robbed of all their property. Mr Ebenezer Gentleman, the agent of a mercantile firm, travelling from Shiraz to Isfahan, met this fate near the ruins of Persepolis, the culprits being Lashanis who for sport had just destroyed several hundred telegraph insulators. The next victim was Mr Monkton of the Church Missionary Society, and there quickly followed the case of Mr J. E. Smith of the Indo-European Telegraph Department. Besides these there were numerous instances of strippings, beatings, and robberies of native employees of the Telegraph Department, all of which went unpunished, despite vigorous representations from the Legation. The truth was that representations might just as effectively have been addressed to the Man in the Moon as to the Persian Government, for the one had no more power to ensure retribution than the other. What sort of fortune overtook native travellers who ventured abroad can easily be imagined, for almost all the roads in the country were alive with robbers. Trade between the various parts of the country, needless to say, was at a standstill.

Turning to less bloody aspects of the situation, the action taken by the Russian Government in relation to a particular financial transaction might be mentioned. The necessities of the Persian Government were at this moment so great that the most extraordinary devices for obtaining funds were tried. This is one of them. A wealthy merchant, whose landed properties were valued at one million sterling, owed the Russian Bank £400,000, secured on notes of hand. The Government attempted to squeeze the merchant, whereupon he took *bast* in the Russian Legation. Pressed to meet his obligations to the



Bank he declared himself helpless, and under Moham-medan law it was impossible for the Bank to take over the properties and realise. Realisation in any case was difficult, partly because of the unsettled condition of the country, and partly because no man dared to admit possession of ready money to purchase estates lest the Government pounced upon him. After protracted negotiations, however, the following scheme was evolved. The Persian Government agreed to take over all the properties of the debtor, and in exchange to assume his debts, plus an additional £80,000 which was to be advanced by the Bank to enable the debtor to free himself of minor obligations. The effect of this transaction would have been to increase the national debt of Persia by half a million pounds, and to augment the Crown property by huge estates. Ostensibly the object of the arrangement was to set on his legs again an important man of business whose inability to settle his affairs added considerably to the stagnation of trade. It rescued the Bank from an unfortunate position and gave it a Government for a debtor instead of an individual. But this perfectly legitimate transaction concealed an ingenious scheme for raising the wind. As *quid pro quo* for their altruism the Persian Government privately arranged with the debtor that the cash involved should be lent to them. In effect, the arrangement gave the Shah a new lease of life, for not only did it provide him with a large sum of ready money, but gave him possession of valuable property which could be sold or mortgaged, regardless of the interests of the country. The Nationalists, who had something more than an inkling of what was being engineered, were greatly dismayed at the prospect of the Shah obtaining the

funds, lack of which principally prevented adequate measures being taken against the various forces in the field in the Constitutional cause. It was common talk among them at this time that the Shah was being secretly financed by the Russian Bank, despite their notification to the Legations that debts contracted by the Government without the consent of Parliament were unconstitutional, and would not thereafter be acknowledged. In complete refutation of this charge, however, the Russian Finance Minister, on being asked to sanction the above arrangement—the *Banque d'Escompte de Perse* is an offshoot of the Ministry of Finance, similar to the Russo-Chinese Bank—definitely refused, on the ground that he would be no party to a transaction which involved an increase in the Persian debt in the interests of a monarch who had turned a deaf ear to the joint advice of the Powers, and who had shown himself so incapable of effecting reform in his administration. Not only, then, did the Russian Government give substantial proof of its sincerity in supporting the British view that the Shah should not be helped in his campaign against the Constitution, but it did so at material loss, leaving the Bank in the unfortunate position of being unable to recover this very important debt.

Another expedient of the Government was to sell Crown Jewels. This was a difficult matter to effect, for neither the British nor Russian Banks would undertake the business, while private parties were shy of admitting their ability to buy. A secret expedition from Paris, however, including an expert in the valuation of jewellery, had no such qualms, and trade to the extent of about £10,000 worth took place before the cat escaped from the bag. Some



very innocent travellers interested in antiquities were then realised to be playing a deep game, with large sums at their disposal. They were immediately warned that the Revolutionaries at Resht would take care that any articles which they might purchase would be confiscated on the way out of the country, and the buyers' throats cut into the bargain. The innocent travellers were not of the fire-eating order, and, bluffed into stopping operations by this gentle hint, they left for Europe in considerable haste.

Events in Persia duly incurred for that country the interest of certain friends of Liberty in England, who constituted themselves under the title of the Persia Committee into a sort of cross between the Balkan Committee and the coterie of politicians in the House of Commons which used to make it its business to find fault with British proceedings in India. Those members of the Persia Committee who had seats in the House of Commons lost no opportunity of bullying the Foreign Office on the subject of its omissions and commissions in Persia, while those without a place in St Stephen's endeavoured to enlist popular sympathy through the medium of the Press. The pet aversion of these kind-hearted gentlemen was Russia, in connection with whose actions, motives, and ends, as regards Persia, they constantly detected the presence of the cloven hoof. Indeed it was sometimes a little difficult to know whether the principal object of the Committee was to sympathise with Persia or to discredit the Anglo-Russian Agreement. In March the vote on the Foreign Office estimates gave them an unrivalled opportunity of enunciating their opinions and pressing their beliefs on the House of Commons. Like members of corresponding committees, however, it was the misfortune of the members of the Persia



Committee to be very credulous in the matter of stories from the objects of their sympathy, and all sorts of exaggerated tales from Persia were freely accepted by them. Indeed it was quite a joke among Teheran Nationalists, when absurdities arose in connection with the situation, that such matters must at once be communicated to the Persia Committee for ventilation in the House of Commons. It was very easy, therefore, for Sir Edward Grey effectively to answer the charges brought against the Government, and the debate did nothing to convert opinion to the views of the Committee. Mr Dillon, whose warm-hearted temperament makes him particularly susceptible to Persian grievances, had been badly victimised on one point, for, among other items in a long speech, was a denunciation of 'The Times' for being inimical to all national movements, and for having, in this case, dismissed their Persian correspondent on account of his Nationalist views, and appointed in his place another correspondent (my humble self) to write down the Constitutional cause—accusations which met with flat and circumstantial denial in next day's paper. My good friend Mr Lynch also took the opportunity to reproach 'The Times,' and incidentally to ask why this correspondent who had been deputed to disparage Persian efforts to acquire freedom should unjustifiably state that the Bakhtiaris who had espoused the Nationalist cause were a tribe of robbers, when all the world, and particularly the Secretary of State, knew them to be honest and law-abiding people. As a matter of fact, I had specially excepted the Bakhtiaris from the charge of being robbers, as were the other tribes risen in the south of Persia, because their share in the protection of the trade route associated with the enterprise of Mr Lynch's firm was well known. But this direct incite-

ment to examine Bakhtiari doings in detail rather than in entirety was too strong to be resisted, and I was able, shortly afterwards, to have a quiet dig at their champion by telegraphing that instead of the Bakhtiaris marching upon Teheran to re-establish the Constitution, as they had been constantly threatening, "small bodies of the tribe were congenially occupied in robbery on the Lynch Road between Kum and Sultanabad," and that they appeared to have "pillaged two post waggons, plundered numerous travellers, and committed four murders within a fortnight."

In this chapter I have made no mention of certain essential features of the situation which were continually in evidence. The siege of Tabriz was being actively prosecuted during the period to which events here described relate, but as its progress was so important as regards the whole position I propose to give it a chapter to itself. The threat of invasion from Isfahan and Resht was also being constantly reiterated throughout this period, but here again events lend themselves to separate treatment. It is only necessary to remark, then, in concluding this chapter, that that section of the inhabitants of Teheran who were interested in politics was kept in a continual condition of tension by the ever-growing prospect of the fall of Tabriz; while the whole population was deeply apprehensive of the consequences to the capital of its invasion by Bakhtiari tribesmen, and by those people supposed equally dangerous, the Revolutionaries from Resht.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE SIEGE OF TABRIZ.

WHEN Mohamed Ali Shah in June 1908 bombarded the Parliament in Teheran out of existence, the city of Tabriz became convulsed with emotion. Mohamed Ali had been Governor of Azerbaijan province for many years and the people of Tabriz knew him well, and feared him from experience. They had become ardent Constitutionalists very largely that the power of Mohamed Ali might be diminished. When the monarch, who had been their own governor, triumphed over his enemies and reasserted his position in the capital, these good Constitutionalists were immediately divided into two parties—those who held it wisdom to side with the strong, and those who had no hope of the strong. In other words, there was a Royalist side and a Nationalist side, and the consequence of their antagonism was a state of armed excitement in which business was suspended and law and order forgotten. But there was no fighting pending news from Teheran, and some indication of what the Shah intended to do with Tabriz. That very soon became apparent, for the redoubtable Rahim Khan arrived early in July, accompanied by five hundred tribal horsemen, and armed with instructions to support



the Royalists in the town and to punish the Nationalists. Only a few years before, Rahim Khan had been a brilliant bandit in the neighbouring hills of Karadagh, too brilliant indeed for the comfort of Azerbaijan, and he had been captured and sent in chains to Teheran, there to languish in gaol until fortune smiled again. This occurred when the Shah wanted to crush Tabriz and needed somebody to effect his purpose who would not mince matters. So the chains were loosed from Rahim Khan, money supplied, and orders given him to make haste to his old haunts and raise a force for operations against Tabriz. The wild tribesmen flew to his banner, warm in the cause of the Shah, hot on behalf of Islam, and absolutely boiling for the loot that was to be their reward.

Rahim Khan and his lawless followers established themselves in the town and proceeded to disarm those quarters which tendered submission. Several of the quarters were occupied by Nationalists, who showed no tendency to submit, but who kept their readiness to do the other thing more or less in the background. Matters went so swimmingly for a day or two that military precautions were relaxed by Rahim Khan, whereupon his men began to attend to their own needs in the outskirts of the town. Encountering no opposition they got bolder and bolder, and day by day the voices of the inhabitants who suffered from their robberies and exactions became louder and louder. The climax came when the Karadaghis invaded a public bath on the women's day and worked their will on the defenceless bathers. The sight of their weeping wives and daughters drove the Tabrizis distracted, and with one accord—so the story goes—the whole populace surged, unarmed, to Rahim Khan's quarters with the intention of throwing

themselves at the feet of the Dictator and begging for mercy. But when the seething crowds became visible from the house of Rahim Khan, that worthy and his followers thought the city had taken arms against them, whereupon they arose in haste and went forth into the wilderness. The flight of Rahim Khan convinced the townsfolk that the Shah's was the losing side, whereafter they all became violent Nationalists, deeply exultant for their brilliant victory. There now began the celebrated siege, the Shah's followers trying to re-enter the town, the Nationalists inside striving to keep them out.

In due course Prince Ain-ed-Dowleh—he of the £1000 draft—arrived to take up the appointment of Governor. He was supported by an army, commanded by the Sipahdar who afterwards became a Nationalist champion, composed of regular troops from Teheran, including Persian Cossacks with modern artillery, and tribal cavalry, both Kurdish and Bakhtiari. Meanwhile Nationalist leaders had been discovered in the persons of Sattar Khan, who had been a brigand and a horse-dealer before he took to politics and religion, and Baghir Khan, a stone-mason in times of peace. Fighting was soon in full swing, the Royalists occupying one part of the town and the Nationalists another. Extensive barricading divided the opposing forces, while the nature of the ground, covered as it was with innumerable mud walls and cut up into small gardens, permitted a great deal of firing with very little danger. On the whole, the Nationalists appear to have got considerably the best of the fighting, succeeding at any rate in keeping their opponents off until the arrival of the winter snow, when operations were very much relaxed. Ain-ed-Dowleh's failure to assert his position caused great disgust in



Teheran, and he was dismissed, and Firman Firma appointed in his stead. The latter declined to take up his appointment, however, so Ain-ed-Dowleh was renominated. This phase of the siege was dealt with in detail in the columns of 'The Times,' whose Special Correspondent furnished a series of graphic letters in which the situation was painted in colours ludicrous and pathetic, heroic and pusillanimous as its varying aspects suggested. A short extract from one which appeared on 28th August makes instructive reading, indicating as it does the extraordinary ideas that prevail in Persia as to what constitutes fighting and fighting men. Describing the forces on each side the Correspondent writes:—

But of all the cheap warriors who have graced Tabriz during the last six weeks the honest peasants of the Shah's Royal Regiment have cut the worst figure. They marched from Teheran to join Rahim Khan in his repressive measures. Met by a local band they marched in 800 strong. Of this 800 none had ammunition, 200 only were armed, and 400 incomplete uniforms had been divided between all ranks. The very first day of their arrival the men protested to the inhabitants their friendliness towards them, and, as if in earnest of this, those who were told off to furnish guards surrendered their rifles to the first revolutionary who made a claim. For a week they subsisted on the charity of the town. Then 500 of them gravely handed such oddments of Government property as they possessed to their officers, and took the road back to their homes near Teheran. A few days later a public subscription was started for the remaining 300 to furnish them with sufficient funds to enable them to follow their comrades. The people calculated that this would be cheaper than keeping them. Thereupon the last of the gallant regiment marched out of Tabriz grateful for the bounty which would enable them to reach their homes.

So much for the Royalist forces. The anti-Royalists are not much better. Sattar Khan has with him a score or two of well-armed Caucasian mercenaries who are the backbone of his success. For the rest he has to depend upon an army of tinkers, whose chief intention in carrying arms is blackmail, while their last is to do any serious fighting. Four krans a-day is their wage, and if they can add another two or three to that by blackmailing the timid, they will not mind



how long the bazaars are closed. There are perhaps 100 men in each faction who are determined fighting men. The rest is all stage property.

With the departure of 'The Times' Correspondent in the beginning of October a detailed narrative of events at Tabriz ceased to be available, and the progress of the siege remains somewhat obscure for the next few months. During that period, however, there was not much active fighting, partly owing to the deep snow, and partly to the realisation of the Royalists that they were putting themselves at a disadvantage in attacking a town so built that its endless walls constituted a series of fortresses one within another. By mutual consent apparently the different sections of the beleaguering force, the regulars and Bakhtiaris with Ain-ed-Dowleh, the Karadaghis under Rahim Khan, and the Kurdish tribes under a ruffianly leader called Samad Khan, took up independent positions on the principal roads entering the town, thereby cutting off supplies from outside. The Nationalists made sorties, and on several occasions were successful in defeating the besiegers, but not in forcing them to raise the blockade. Without cavalry, and backed by only a handful of men who would venture into the open, Sattar Khan could really do little more than create temporary diversions which permitted the ingress of limited quantities of supplies.

By the end of January (1909), however, news reached Teheran that a new spirit had begun to animate the besiegers, and that a determined attempt was being made definitely and effectively to establish a blockade. Henceforward information from the beleaguered town was on an ascending scale of seriousness, and apprehensions began to be entertained that tragedy was about to be superimposed upon the absurdities which had

hitherto principally distinguished the operations. Events elsewhere in Persia were responsible for this new-born activity. The advent of the Bakhtiariis at Isfahan, and later the appearance of the Caucasian Revolutionaries at Resht, both threatening to advance upon the capital, together with the defection of several of the principal towns, and the fact that certain of the powerful tribes in the country were keenly watching the situation, made it imperative for the Shah to make an effort to score a victory over his opponents. He could not retire his forces from Tabriz and employ them for the defence of the capital without adding the whole of Azerbaijan to the side of his enemies, as well as ruining his prestige throughout the country. Victory at Tabriz, on the other hand, meant the adhesion of the tribes who were sitting on the fence, the release of a considerable portion of the forces engaged in the attack, probably the acquisition of treasure by a levy on the wealth of Tabriz, and generally such a triumph for his cause that the Bakhtiariis and Revolutionaries would retire from the field altogether, and so bring about the collapse of the Nationalist movement in a militant sense. To that end Ain-ed-Dowleh and the tribal chiefs before Tabriz were exhorted to push matters with the utmost vigour, while money, ammunition, and reinforcements were despatched to their assistance.

In consequence of these efforts one might suppose great and co-ordinated activity in the camps before Tabriz. The tribal chiefs, it is true, showed renewed interest in the proceedings, doubtless because they were promised anew unlimited opportunities of pillage. But Ain-ed-Dowleh seemed sunk in lethargy, lacking either the courage or the enterprise to employ the resources at his command. Never once was Tabriz



attacked by all three commanders at once, and only twice by two at the same time. Apparently each leader took the field when the spirit moved him, and without any effort to obtain the co-operation of his colleagues. But while none of the attackers seemed to care about fighting, the tribesmen were quite at home in the task of occupying the roads and making the entrance of supplies impossible. They roamed the surrounding country in every direction, harrying and robbing to their hearts' content. The most harrowing details of their doings reached us in Teheran, and the Legations warned the Shah repeatedly of the necessity of controlling his wild supporters. That, however, was beyond the Shah's power, and not only did the natives, Moslem and Christian, suffer extreme hardships at their hands, but Russian subjects and Russian property were treated with scant courtesy. Indeed, before the siege was over, Russian losses, and consequently Russian claims for compensation from the Persian Government, amounted to hundreds of thousands of roubles, and it is one of the remarkable features of the situation so arisen that Russia abstained from intervention when her interests were being so seriously interfered with and her subjects roughly handled. Nobody in those days who ventured on the main road between Tabriz and the Russian border was safe. Two European merchants who made a dash for it were stripped naked in the snow and left to find their way to the frontier in goloshes, lucky to have escaped with their lives. To catalogue the outrages and barbarities that took place would be an endless task.

Turning to the situation inside the town, we find that the resources of the defenders were considerable. They had at their disposal 20,000 rifles, an adequate supply of ammunition, and about a dozen cannons of



old-fashioned type. The majority of the rifles, however, remained in the arsenal, for although the city contained 250,000 inhabitants whose lives were in jeopardy, only 2000 were found bold enough to assume a weapon in self-defence. And of that number there were only some 250 who in the smallest degree were entitled to be called fighting men. So runs the account of a devoted European, who was so much in love with the Nationalist cause that he joined it, to the imminent danger of his life. As regards food-supplies, however, the situation was much less satisfactory. The fighting during the previous autumn had prevented the accumulation of grain stocks in the town granaries, according to custom. A large fruit harvest in the surrounding gardens had not been exported owing to the condition of the roads, and in a dried condition served to some extent to replace the shortage of cereals. Altogether, however, the position was serious, and it was recognised in the middle of February that if supplies could not be imported existing stocks must be exhausted within two months. In these circumstances prices ruled high, while trade and enterprise being at a standstill, the working classes were without the power of earning the wages that would have purchased bread. With the majority of the population thus reduced almost to starvation, painful scenes were of continual occurrence, and many died of hunger.

During this time, extraordinary to relate, the telegraph line between Teheran and Tabriz remained unbroken, and we were able freely to communicate with the besieged town. For a fortnight the continuation of the line northward from Tabriz, a section of the Indo-European connection, was broken; but as the Company was entitled to £500 per day compensation

for each day the wires were out of work through fault of the Persian Government, strenuous efforts were made to effect a repair, and no other important stoppage took place, though that result was due to the heroism of the telegraph employees in risking their lives to mend the accidental breakages by bullets which were continually taking place. We were thus made aware in the beginning of April that affairs had reached a critical stage, and that supplies must inevitably be exhausted within three weeks if the siege continued. Simultaneously came the news that two Europeans had joined the Nationalist forces and were busily engaged in drilling volunteers. One of these was Mr Baskerville, an American teacher employed in the school of the American Mission, and the other an Irishman, Mr W. A. Moore, sometime Secretary to the Balkan Committee, who was representing a syndicate of Liberal papers in Persia. Mr Moore, as one would expect from his antecedents, went to Tabriz as an ardent supporter of the Nationalist cause; but, judging from what he subsequently wrote, he must have been grievously disappointed in the people behind it. Nevertheless, when their prospects looked blackest and hope had almost departed from them, he and Baskerville, neither of whom knew the beginnings of soldiering, enlisted in their ranks with the object of instilling courage into the drooping Nationalists, and in the hope of embuing them, by precept and example, with some of the energy and resource of the European. When the siege was over an article appeared in 'The Times' (3rd July 1909) from the pen of an Occasional Correspondent, which thinly veiled the identity of the writer, whose Liberal employers had dispensed with his services when he associated himself with the Nationalists. It would be difficult to imagine a document com-



binning more completely the extremely ludicrous with the supremely pathetic. "It was essentially a contest between two sets of inefficients and incapables, each of which feared the other," is the verdict of the writer in graphically and amusingly summing up the fighting capacity of both defenders and besiegers. In view of that opinion he and his companion could have joined the defenders only out of pity for their helplessness. But the description of the fight in which Baskerville lost his life, and in which Mr Moore modestly ignores the danger which he himself equally incurred, makes one indignant to think that two Europeans should have given themselves so generously, but so uselessly, for a people and a cause so undeserving. Let me quote :—

The rendezvous was fixed for midnight. Somewhat to my surprise the whole of my 350 men and of Mr Baskerville's 150 turned up—at the rendezvous. The rest came more slowly, and hours passed before we moved on. It was arranged that Mr Baskerville should attack on the right; the handful of Armenians, Georgians, and Caucasian Muslims, with a Persian force, on the left; while my men took the centre. Satar Khan was to give support all round with a force which was announced to be 1000, but proved to be less than 200; and in point of fact this never came on at all or got into action. When my command got close to the enemy's barricades, at 4.30, it had dwindled from 350 to 27. This, of course, was entirely to be expected. The system of natural selection worked always with admirable automatic precision, and this residuum of the more resolute cheerfully opened fire at 4.30, and almost immediately rushed the enemy's position. Mr Baskerville's followers, who had sunk to nine, engaged on the right, while the Caucasians, bereft of their Persian comrades, joined in on the left, numbering some thirty. So little, therefore, do numbers matter, and such is the engaging inconsequence of war in Persia, that the whole attack on Karamelik, with its garrison of 2000, was begun by less than 70 men. Mr Baskerville was shot through the heart before six o'clock while exposing himself in front in order to try to get the men to advance; and after his death, although later more of his men came up, the right stuck fast. On the left and in the centre, for the kind of warfare, things went with astonishing and splendid go. Soon after six we rushed the enemy again. They bolted at once, and thus



we gained a second garden's length. Some of the recreants plucked up heart, and supports kept dribbling up in daylight till we numbered about 150. . . . By noon hunger, sleeplessness, heat, and toil were telling heavily, and the men were dribbling away. The remnant rose to another rush, and now only one garden's length separated us from the village of Karamelik. It was the enemy's last line. But, as had so often happened, there were none to claim the final victory which was so easily possible. The stream of supports had long since failed, and the tide was ebbing the other way. Not a man came up to relieve the spent force of the night. It was impossible to get them to advance the last length of garden.

So much for the brave Persians who were giving their lives for their Constitution. Without the Caucasians, Armenians, and Georgians one would like to know how much fighting there would have been at Tabriz! It is incidental that I saw in Teheran shortly afterwards a letter from a European in Tabriz stating that not a single Persian would go out after the fight to bring in Baskerville's body, and that if it had not been for the devotion of the Caucasians, who were already exhausted by the exertions of the day, the unfortunate American's remains would have been left to be eaten by the dogs. But I must do Mr Moore justice, for, despite this experience, he has praise for the people of Tabriz. "They could not fight, but they could starve. The terrible tortures of hunger were endured with a resignation which compelled admiration. In the last few days the people were eating grass, and for weeks before the scenes outside the open bakeries . . . were pitiful to witness." The submissive patience of the Oriental is no doubt a quality to command admiration, but one is disposed to think, in the light of what followed, that Mr Moore gave the inhabitants of Tabriz credit for a degree of resignation which they did not possess.

By the middle of April the situation in Tabriz had

become so serious that the Legations in Teheran had requested the Persian Government to permit the entrance of food-supplies for foreigners. This was refused, but willingness was expressed to assist in adequately protecting those who wished to leave the town. An effort was made to effect a compromise between the belligerents, and the Nationalists in Tabriz offered to accept a modified Constitution—where they had hitherto demanded the original one intact, *plus* various stipulations—and an amnesty; whereas the Shah, while promising just treatment, insisted on unconditional surrender. From his attitude it was obvious that the Shah was confident of success with little delay; further evidence that Tabriz was really on its last legs was quickly forthcoming, and in dramatic fashion.

On 19th April the alarming news was telegraphed that the local Nationalist Assembly was believed to be organising an attack upon foreigners, if the Powers did not immediately intervene to save the situation. Famished mobs were restrained from rioting with the greatest difficulty; and while the fighting men had supplies and would not surrender, the inhabitants found themselves without provisions, facing starvation on one hand and the Shah's ruthless tribesmen on the other. In their frenzied condition they saw no escape but by sacrificing Europeans and bringing Russian troops on the scene. Further advices suggested that the rascally leaders, Sattar Khan and Baghir Khan, who from being beggars before had become rich men through appropriating the funds forcibly collected for the defence, were encouraging the populace in the idea of attacking the Consulates in order to divert attention from themselves—they being now regarded in the town with marked hostility.



Telegrams were immediately despatched by the British and Russian Legations to their respective Consuls-General, containing messages for Sattar Khan and the other leaders, to the effect that the outrages in contemplation "would exclude all concerned from any amnesty and ensure the most vigorous punishment of those responsible." It was hoped that the warning contained in these words would temporarily restrain the Nationalists from carrying their threat into effect. Meanwhile the two Legations took energetic steps to deal with the situation. Sir George Barclay and M. Sabline demanded an audience of the Shah, whereat they pointed out that an armistice and permission for supplies to enter the town was the only solution of the difficulty that had arisen.

To this course the Shah was strongly averse, on the ground that any relief to the town meant the undoing of the work of the past nine months. After a long discussion and the application of strong pressure, however, the Shah consented to an armistice for six days, and to the importation into the town of bread sufficient to feed the inhabitants for that period. So much gained, Sir George Barclay and M. Sabline followed up their advantage two days later by making the long-deferred representations which were the outcome of the *pourparlers* instituted in London and St Petersburg nearly four months before, and which had hitherto been delayed on account of the uncompromising attitude of the Shah. The representations consisted principally of urging upon the Shah the necessity of fulfilling his promises in regard to the re-establishment of the Constitution, and concluded by conveying a solemn warning to his Majesty that if he ignored the advice now offered jointly by the two Powers,



he would for ever forfeit their sympathy and the claims for protection which the ruler of a State had the right to expect from powerful neighbours. The Shah on both these occasions did all his own talking, and impressed both Sir George Barclay and M. Sabline by the sense and moderation he displayed throughout what must have been uncommonly unpalatable interviews.

Prior to the concession of the armistice, however, the news of the serious situation of the Consuls and foreigners in Tabriz had led the British Government entirely to concur with the Russian in the necessity for taking active measures for protecting Europeans. To this end troops were being prepared in the Caucasus for despatch to Tabriz, with the object of escorting supplies of food and of covering the retreat of the foreigners if that step should prove necessary. The arrangement effected in Teheran, however, led the Russian Government to defer departure of the troops, particularly as the Legations held out a hope that their forthcoming general representations might lead to a settlement of the Constitutional question and the final cessation of hostilities. Meanwhile the joyful news of the armistice had been telegraphed to Tabriz, occasioning a great revulsion of feeling. The fears of the starving people were allayed, and delegates were immediately sent to the Royalist camp to make purchases of food, in the expectation of receiving every assistance from Ain-ed-Dowleh.

But that officer professed himself entirely without instructions, and though he appeared to have heard about the armistice, he declined either to help or to allow the delegates to procure supplies. This news created a very bad impression in the town, and when there immediately followed, as a consequence of the

cessation of fighting on the Nationalist side, the occupation of a Nationalist position by Samad Khan, suspicion that the Consuls had been merely playing with them to gain time was loudly expressed. The situation of Europeans, in fact, became extremely critical when it was found by the populace that the Shah's officers paid no attention to the armistice. In consequence of this fresh development it was decided between London and St Petersburg that there should be no further delay in sending the troops which were in waiting, and orders were immediately given for a flying column to march from the frontier in all haste. In taking this decision it was recognised by the Powers that they were employing a powerful lever to force the Shah seriously to consider their representations on the subject of the Constitution. It was obvious from the delay in instructing the Royalist forces to admit supplies that the Court was obstructive, and hoped to see the town forced into unconditional surrender for lack of food. That occurring, the Shah had the game in his own hands, and would assuredly laugh at all advice.

To what extent the Shah was guilty of violating the formal agreement with the Legations on the subject of the armistice never became clear. That instructions to his officers on the spot were delayed to such an extent as seriously to jeopardise the whole arrangement is perfectly certain, but those most qualified to judge held the opinion that certain Court officials were to blame, either for absolutely withholding the instructions, or for at least telegraphing to the scene of operations in a sense that rendered the instructions inoperative. In any case, the mischief was done, and the doing of it cost the Shah extremely dear; for without the failure immediately to fulfil the terms of



the armistice, the Russian troops probably would never have come upon the scene at all, and a surrender might have been arranged that would have conceded all the glory to the Royalist side. Nobody in the town cared a fig for the Constitution while his belly was empty, and the fighting leaders were prepared to make any terms that would have saved their skins.

The appearance of the Russian force acted like oil on troubled waters. Their numbers were amply sufficient to overawe the Shah's disappointed tigers, who did not dare misbehave themselves in the presence of tangible force. The townsfolk welcomed the troops eagerly because of the convoys of food which they escorted, and all went merry as a marriage-bell for the space of twenty-four hours. But no sooner had their hunger been assuaged than the Nationalists began to lament. Making the best of his disappointment, the Shah, on learning of the movement of the Russian troops, opened negotiations with his dear subjects at Tabriz. They, in reply, appealed to their unkind father to rescue their common country from the danger of partition. They were willing that the Shah's soldiers should enter and kill all rather than that Persia should be delivered over to the ravening northerners. The Shah is reported to have read this appeal with tears rolling down his cheeks, and to have ordered immediately an indefinite extension of the armistice and every facility for the introduction of food. Even the courtiers were roused to patriotic expression, and they addressed his Majesty in indignant terms, pointing out that Persia had stood aloof when Great Britain was fighting the Boers, and when Russia was engaged with the Japanese. What right, therefore, had England and Russia to intervene in Persia when she was engaged in civil war! This



frame of mind lasted for a brief space in Tabriz, and then the Nationalists, finding themselves out of all danger, suddenly changed their attitude towards their unkind father and demanded extravagant terms, and even threatened to resume resistance if they were not granted. Nor did they fail to turn upon the hand that saved them from disaster. Hardly were the Russian troops established outside their gates than a bitter agitation was started against them. The smallest acts were magnified into the deepest insults, the most ordinary precautions in the interest of order were declared to be ruthless tyranny, while all sorts of false accusations were brought against men and officers. Considering the circumstances in which the Russian troops were brought upon the scene, and their object being the protection of foreign residents whose lives were threatened by a frenzied population, one could hardly expect from them the behaviour of sympathetic friends. Indeed, I have been informed on credible authority that their behaviour was almost irreproachable, and that occasional tactlessness was the worst charge that could be levelled against their commander. Mr Moore in his able and impartial article on the siege entirely bears out this opinion. There were some people in Teheran and elsewhere—not in Tabriz itself—who expressed doubt as to the Nationalists ever having seriously meant to threaten European life, or to have schemed for European intervention by such means. That is a point I cannot discuss from personal knowledge, but I do know that Mr Moore, who so unselfishly and bravely proved himself the friend of Tabriz, believed the charge to be true; that Consul-General Wratislaw sent successive telegrams, which are reproduced in the White-Book,<sup>1</sup> plainly stating that such

<sup>1</sup> Persia, No. 2. 1909.

was the intention of the Nationalists ; and that the leading British residents in Tabriz telegraphed to the Foreign Office that they believed their lives to be in danger. In spite of all that evidence to the contrary, it may be that the Nationalists never really meant mischief, and I am personally of the opinion that they would have died of starvation rather than have faced a handful of well-armed and determined Europeans, even though the odds in their favour were something like five thousand to one.

The outcome of the situation at Tabriz was satisfactory in various ways. The joint action which had resulted in the despatch of Russian troops served several purposes. It saved the Europeans who were supposed to be in jeopardy, it forced the Shah from his attitude of obstinacy in regard to the Constitution, and it averted the catastrophe to the town which had appeared imminent. Above all, it indicated to the Shah that the Powers meant to stand no more nonsense, and that one of them was not the secret friend that he had been led to imagine. With his trump card gone the Shah was all compliance, and there was no doubt that at the moment he was eager to compromise. No definite reply to the formal representations was received for some time, but the Legations were given to understand that difficulties would not be raised. The true significance of the Anglo-Russian action which brought about this *volte-face* must not be overlooked. The foregoing narrative makes it abundantly clear that Tabriz was on the point of falling, and that victory must have given the Royalist cause a tremendous fillip, if not a complete triumph. How long the Shah in that case would have been able to maintain his advantage is quite another question ; he may or may not there-

after have made a fool of himself and effected no improvement in the condition of the country. But nothing alters the fact that but for the intervention of armed force at the instigation of the two Governments Mohamed Ali would have been master of the situation for the time being. As it was, England and Russia robbed him of his triumph and gave the game to the Nationalists ; their action, in effect, amounted to definite intervention in favour of the Constitutional side. How far-reaching were the consequences of that action I shall endeavour to show in the following chapter.



## CHAPTER VI.

## THE ADVANCE UPON TEHERAN.

It was not to be expected that the Shah's surrender would be of the unequivocal order associated with corresponding action in regions where the human mind works on another plan. Mental reservation is as precious a privilege of the Persian as freedom of conscience is of the Anglo-Saxon, and the man who in Persia makes promises under stress violates no rule of behaviour when he breaks those promises. To make a Persian keep his promises, in fact, you must maintain the stress. For that reason the European is apt to get a little abroad in his estimation of Persian character. Yea and Nay are of little account in Persia, or, indeed, anywhere else in the Orient; what counts are the circumstances that compel a negative or an affirmative. Hence, when Mohamed Ali said he would restore the Constitution, when he promised to restore it, when he swore to restore it, when he took solemn oath on the Koran to restore it, his protestations were of value exactly in ratio to the forces which prompted him to these different degrees of asseveration. Nationalists pretended to think their Shah a very wicked man when he forgot his oath registered upon the title-page of the Holy Book. But I am

convinced that the clergy who surrounded Mohamed Ali Shah could have logically and justifiably acquitted him of sin—from the Persian point of view. The clergy on the Nationalist side, I am equally convinced, could have proved him worthy of eternal damnation. It is, indeed, as the reader no doubt perceives, not a question of guilt at all, but of which side you happen to be on.

The Shah's first wriggle took the form of an announcement that he was willing to grant a Constitution in conformity with the Sacred Law. But the Nationalists were sick of the Sacred Law, and wanted something much more up to date. The Shah next made an effort to improve the situation by making changes in the Cabinet. He dismissed the Prime Minister and the Minister for War, and gave both portfolios to his own uncle, one of the most incorrigible reactionaries in the country. At the same time he drafted a rescript which embodied the principles of a Constitution that were no more acceptable to the people than one based on Sacred Law. These manoeuvres brought the Legations into the field with an intimation that the proceedings of the Shah did not meet with their approval, and that if a plain answer to their representations was not forthcoming within two days another audience would be demanded. The Shah replied by dismissing his Foreign Minister, who happened to be the special nominee of the two Legations. This apparently irreconcilable attitude was modified by some plain speaking from the Legations, and the Shah being awakened to the danger of his position—the Bakhtiari and Revolutionaries were still threatening—the barometer went up and up, until on his birthday, 5th May, his Majesty formally notified the Legations that he accepted their advice.

An Imperial rescript set forth that the disorderly condition of the country necessitated measures for the reorganisation of the administration, which could be secured only through the operation of the Constitutional principle. The rescript fixed a date two months ahead for the elections, while subsequent proclamations announced a political amnesty and the formation of a committee to draft an electoral law that would satisfy all parties. At the same time a Liberal Cabinet was formed, in which the principal place was offered to Nasr-ul-Mulk, the Nationalist Premier who had to flee the country eighteen months before. At this time I telegraphed to London (14th May) that matters were proceeding smoothly, though only the angels could tell what trouble lay ahead.

In chapter iv. I described the murderous descent of Caucasian Revolutionaries upon Resht. It depends upon one's outlook upon life in general whether one regards these worthies as noble beings fired in a noble cause, or, let us say, as soldiers of fortune. Certainly it is a little hard to think that individuals, more than half of whom are Christians of a kind who have suffered terrible wrongs at the hand of Islam, should take their lives in their hands solely to assist Moslems to a modern form of government. But they breed queer fish in the Caucasus, and one must not be dogmatic on the point. Anyhow the Revolutionaries spent several happy months in Resht, living upon the fat of the land, occasionally murdering a Royalist, and firmly and indiscriminately taxing the inhabitants in the interests of the Constitutionalist war-chest. It must be said for them that they kept good order in the town, did not interfere with the conduct of trade, and showed distinguished politeness to European travellers. They gradually spread themselves along



the Caspian-Teheran road, and occasionally threatened to stop the mails or blow up a bridge, according as their cause waxed or waned in the capital. But from these and other acts of violence they were deterred by the knowledge that Russia was ready to bring troops upon the scene.

Sipahdar, their leader, occupied a peculiar position. He was commander of the troops besieging Tabriz six months before, so had not long since been actively engaged against the Nationalists. But quarrels with Ain-ed-Dowleh led to his departure from the front, and he retired to his estates on the Caspian coast. There he remained until February, when he left home ostensibly to make a journey to Teheran. *En route* he was detained by the Revolutionaries at Resht, and chosen as their leader, apparently by chance. The Shah endeavoured to lessen the blow to the prestige of his Government by requesting Sipahdar by telegram to remain at Resht, and to maintain order in his Majesty's name pending the arrival of troops and a new Governor to replace the one assassinated. Telegrams from Resht to the capital were henceforward of a two-edged character, for they breathed at the same time fealty to the Shah and allegiance to the Constitution, whereof the Revolutionaries were the main hope, many having sworn to kill the Shah with their own hands. In fact, Sipahdar never wavered in loyalty, despite his following and their well-known aims. The two frames of mind may strike the European as somewhat incompatible, but east of Ararat the capacity to serve God and Mammon with equal sincerity is more highly developed than in the west.

Let us now turn to the other champions of the Constitution. The influences that brought the Bakh-tiaris into the field are not easy to estimate at their

precise value. They may be enumerated, however, with some certainty. The original impulse came from Paris, where one of the chiefs, a man of some ability and culture, consorted with the Persians, Turks, Egyptians, and Indians who dream dreams of the regeneration of their respective countries. It was not easy to dwell amid such ideas without being infected by them, particularly when it was the aim of the refugees from Mohamed Ali's wrath to interest in the Nationalist cause one who had at his back a powerful tribe, famous, in Persia, for its fighting qualities. Sirdar Assad would hardly have been human if he had resisted the blandishments put upon him. He became a Nationalist, and his *rôle* was to be that of his country's saviour. And it must here be said for him that he was able to put away from him the delights and allurements of the French capital, which have brought about the moral and physical downfall of so many Orientals, and to devote himself with ardour to the newly adopted cause.

Sirdar Assad's brother was Ilkhani of the Bakhtiari, and as official chief of the Khans was both the most influential and the most powerful among the tribesmen. When communications on the subject of support of the Constitutional cause were opened Sirdar Assad's proposals fell on good ground, for Samsam-es-Sultaneh was out of favour with the Shah, and had reason to think his Ilkhaniship in jeopardy. Soon afterwards he was actually deprived of his office, whereupon he became the Shah's violent enemy, and ready for any course that might embarrass the Government. For not only was the Ilkhaniship taken from him, but it was promised to a rival chief, a vehement Royalist, then with the Shah in Teheran. Circumstances favoured activity. Close to the Bakhtiari country lies the



ancient capital of Persia, Isfahan, where a foolish and rapacious Governor made the lives of the people a burden to them. Isfahan, indeed, had a desperate grievance against the Shah, for he had sent to rule over it a creature of his own who had neither respect nor regard for the local Assembly, nor any compunction in taxing the inhabitants three times over. Their respective grievances gave Isfahan and Samsam common ground against the tyrant, and when the one whistled the other appeared on the scene, backed by a thousand horsemen. The Shah's soldiers were scattered like chaff, the obnoxious Governor took *bast* in the British Consulate, and Samsam became ruler over Isfahan.

Of the two other influences in bringing the Bakhtiari into the field, that of the Nationalists in Teheran counted for something, because they announced a deep conspiracy in the capital which would be productive of 6000 armed men when the decisive moment arrived. Samsam may have had his doubts about the numbers, but there could be no question about the voices of these patriots, for they penetrated to the uttermost ends of the country, calling upon the people to uphold the sacred cause of the Constitution. The last influence that animated the Bakhtiari was the least, and that was their own fervour for representative government. With the exception of Sirdar Assad and one or two others who have visited Europe, probably none of the Bakhtiari to this day have attained to any further understanding of what constitution means than is implied by the knowledge that it brings loot to the tribesmen and fat appointments to their chiefs. Entirely without education, the Bakhtiari know none other than patriarchal government, and desire little in the world but freedom to follow their nomadic inclinations. Their ignorance of the merits of the cause in



which they took the field, however, mattered little so long as they followed their chiefs, and in the end the Bakhtiaris proved a potent factor in the development of the Persian revolution.

Samsam-es-Sultaneh, like the Sipahdar from another place, henceforward professed deep loyalty to the Shah, coupled with regret that his Majesty should be surrounded by evil counsellors. Early in the proceedings he announced his Constitutional principles and his profound sympathy with the Nationalists at Tabriz. He intimated that it was his intention to march to Teheran to free the Shah from the sinister influences that perverted his mind, and to establish the Constitution in all its former glory. Weekly manifestos to this effect soon bored us in Teheran, and if one wanted to pull the leg of a Nationalist one had only to ask him when Samsam was coming. Good Samsam, however, was no statesman and never meant his thunder. His ambition was satisfied by sitting quietly in Isfahan and in doing exactly, in so far as he dared, what his predecessor had done before him — milk the people. Isfahan having paid its annual tax thrice in one year to the Royalist Governor, very shortly began to complain that the only advantage they derived from the presence of the Bakhtiaris was the privilege of paying a fourth time to Samsam. Samsam, on his side, soon got to loggerheads with his hosts on account of their parsimony towards the brave men who had rescued them from the clutches of the Shah's satrap. In the end Isfahan was as fain to be rid of its guests as Resht, for it was soon realised that the liability to pay under the flag of the Constitution was no less than under that of the old-fashioned Shah. It must be said for the Bakhtiaris, however, that they kept excellent order and scrupulously observed the usages of civilisation.

And that was very much to their credit, considering who they were, what they were, and where they were. For these highland caterans to have kept their hands off the fat burgesses of Isfahan was truly a triumph of self-denial.

But as for action, the time was not yet come, nor the man. The real leader was Sirdar Assad, the scholar of the tribes, their man of the world, their expert in diplomacy. Not only was his presence necessary to direct affairs and fix upon a policy, but his personal influence was required to settle internal dissensions. Bakhtiari history bears a close resemblance to the chronicles of the clans in Kilkenny and the clans in Caledonia. It abounds in feuds and factions, quarrels and squabbles, which the Bakhtiaris themselves philosophically admit have kept them poor and weak when they might be rich and powerful. At this moment they were sharply divided into two parties, one for the Shah and one for the Constitution. Samsam's party, whatever might be threatened, could never move on Teheran alone. Until the Bakhtiaris were solid they must be impotent. Three hundred were fighting for the Shah at Tabriz, nearly as many were in the field against Samsam. Knowledge of this division satisfied the Court party that there was nothing to be apprehended from Isfahan at that juncture.

Sirdar Assad's first active move was a visit to the Foreign Office in London. Sir Edward Grey expressed some sympathy for his objects, but would advance no money for their prosecution. A trifle was obtained from other friends interested in Persia, and then Sirdar Assad sailed for Bombay. Eventually, on 19th March, he landed at Mohammerah and became the guest of Sheikh Khazzal, a wealthy chieftain from whom much was expected. Now the Shiekh had long coveted



certain lands of the Bakhtiaris, and upon them had already made advances. He now paid a considerable sum to obtain possession outright, thereby putting the Bakhtiari chief in funds and constituting himself a friend to the Nationalist cause. Thus fortified, Sirdar Assad proceeded through the passes into the country of his forefathers, where his real task was to begin. He found it harder than he expected, besides which it did not seem such good business to proceed against the Shah when there seemed every prospect that a Royalist victory at Tabriz was imminent. For a month he lay low, and then, suddenly, Fortune intervened to forward his plans. Anglo-Russian intervention at Tabriz had queered the Shah's pitch and put a totally different complexion on the game. Among the Royalist Bakhtiaris was his own brother, son of the same mother; and although Sirdar Zaffar had sworn on the Koran to be true to the Shah, he had never contemplated such a concatenation of circumstances as the return from abroad of Sirdar Assad, Sirdar Assad's appeal for support, and this knock-down blow to his master the Shah. Overboard went the oath, and his son in command of the family retainers at Tabriz was ordered homeward with his men as fast as their horses' legs would bring them. Faithful to the Shah there now remained but a single Bakhtiari chief, Amir Mufakham; he was cousin of Samsam, Sirdar Assad and Sirdar Zaffar, their permanent opponent in domestic politics, and the one to whom the Shah had held out the prospect of the Ilkhanship. For the purpose of demonstrating on the side of the Constitution, the Bakhtiari were now sufficiently united, and early in May were assembled in Isfahan to the number of some two thousand.

In sympathy with the Bakhtiari gathering, the



Revolutionaries made an important step, and on 4th May occupied Kazvin. Their method was singular, but effective. A handful rode into the town in the evening, and for all I know made themselves at home in a tea-shop. But in the middle of the night they arose and divided into two parties, one of which galloped furiously up and down the streets firing rifles and revolvers, while the other let off bombs under the gateways of the Government offices. Ordinary pandemonium was as dead silence in comparison with the noise thus created, and the hearts of all in Kazvin were turned to water. Five hundred of the Shah's soldiers took wing without firing a shot. Great carnage was reported, but who were the victims, or how many, I have never been able to ascertain. In most matters where figures are concerned one may approach the truth by dividing Persian estimates by ten; but in all that relates to killed and wounded, battles and bloodshed, there is no known divisor that gives a reasonable result. It remains, however, that the Revolutionaries, breathing fire and brimstone, were now established within ninety miles of the capital. Their increased proximity had the effect upon Teheran of a suddenly opened furnace door. My Persian colleague paid them a visit, and reported them armed with a Mauser pistol on the left side, a large Browning revolver in front, and a small Browning on the right. Slung from the shoulders were a large square bomb, a hand-grenade, and two rifles. He could not count the number of knives and daggers protruding from their clothes, but observed that they were completely cuirassed in cartridges of various calibres. Walking arsenals of this description are regarded in Persia as the climax of military efficiency.

The earlier Royalist measures for dealing with the



*Russian N.C.O.'s manning a Maxim at Shahabad.*



*"... walking arsenals ..."*

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Bakhtiari and Revolutionary dangers were extremely feeble, partly because the Shah's resources were strictly limited, and partly because it was understood that in the beginning action was not imminent. On the first appearance of the Revolutionaries at Resht 500 soldiers had been despatched to turn the intruders out, but with delightful inconsequence this body had halted at Kazvin, and there remained until three months later their adversaries arrived and frightened them away. To meet the Bakhtiaris a force numbering 1100 infantry, 400 cavalry, and 6 guns was assembled at Kum, 200 miles away from the objective. After two months of dalliance, and when success at Tabriz seemed to be impending, this force advanced 60 miles to Kashan, and there took another rest.

Simultaneously with the Shah's definite acceptance of Anglo-Russian advice, and the issue of proclamations giving it concrete form, came the news of the Revolutionary advance to Kazvin, and the information that the Bakhtiaris were now united and assembling in force at Isfahan. Rumours of these impending developments had already filtered to the capital, and had no doubt played a part in making the Shah compliant. But the Legations found themselves in a pretty pickle. The Bakhtiaris and the Revolutionaries had repeatedly announced their warlike intentions, but had carefully refrained from carrying them out while Tabriz lay at the mercy of the Shah, and while his Majesty was surrounded by friends who, if reactionary and probably dangerous to the best interests of the country, were at least staunch to their master. By intervening at Tabriz the Powers snatched the winning card from the Shah; by their advice he had denuded himself of his friends. He had fully accepted their programme, and had taken all steps possible in so short a time

to give it reality. But the Nationalists at Teheran were now professing themselves dissatisfied, and their militant allies, at long last, and when the Shah was weakened by the action of the Powers, appeared to be taking the field in earnest. Now that the Shah had granted practically all they wanted they threatened to attack him. Obviously their desire was to get rid of him altogether. It immediately became the main question whether the Powers would take any steps to preserve the balance which they had disturbed.

They did their best. British and Russian Consuls throughout the country were instructed to take every possible means of letting the people know of the Shah's surrender on the Constitutional question, and that the Powers intended to keep Mohamed Ali to his word. Our influence with the Bakhtiaris was used to impress upon them that action on their part now merely complicated the situation in Teheran and made the work of the Legations more difficult. An attaché from the Russian Legation advised the Revolutionaries in the same sense, and made the important intimation that the Russian Government would not tolerate fighting on the road which was at once Russian property, the principal trade route in the country, and the channel for European mails and travellers. The question of sending troops to occupy the road was then under discussion in St Petersburg, and any further action by the Revolutionaries would merely precipitate their despatch. These efforts had the desired result, and it was understood that nothing further would be done for the time being, but that both forces would remain in the field prepared to act in case the progress anticipated by the Legations was not made. Thereafter there was a steady improvement in the situation. The Shah seemed willing that the conduct of affairs should



devolve upon the new Cabinet; the Electoral Committee was hard at work; while another Committee, representing Nationalist opinion, and constituted with the permission of the Shah, was in amicable consultation with the Cabinet regarding the points at issue. So satisfactorily were matters proceeding that on 23rd May I telegraphed that it was difficult to see where a hitch could occur.

But a hitch did occur, and with violence, though not immediately. Tabriz soon came to the front with complaints of the Russians, as already mentioned, and the Nationalists in Teheran became greatly agitated on the subject. The Committee engaged in elaborating the Electoral Law went off the rails altogether and spent its time discussing various matters outside the business in hand. The Nationalist Emergency Committee dissolved, on the ground that the Cabinet did not comply with their reasonable demands. The temper of the Nationalists generally became so difficult that it seriously interfered with progress towards the goal that all had in view—the re-establishment of Constitutional government. They could hardly have been more *exigeant* if they had brought about the situation at the point of the sword, whereas it had been the action of the Powers alone that had saved their cause from disaster. Meanwhile the Shah appeared to be playing the game, though the Nationalists were extremely sceptical on the point. By the end of May the majority of the Bakhtiaris had evacuated Isfahan and retired to their own country, while the Revolutionaries were supposed to have made a movement to some point in the rear of Kazvin, there to await events. Thus in spite of Nationalist peevishness, and dilatoriness as regards the Electoral Law, matters seemed to be going not so badly after all.



Certainly there appeared to be nothing in the shape of a serious cloud on the horizon.

Then all at once came the news that the Bakhtiari were reassembling at Isfahan, and immediately afterwards the information that a large detachment had marched to the north. Sirdar Assad, who now for the first time appeared as the leading spirit, publicly stated that it was his intention to advance upon Teheran in order to ensure the carrying out of the Constitutional programme. That this was no idle threat was evident from its electric effect on the Government. Negotiations for a small loan from Russia, which had been dropped because of the conditions imposed in regard to its expenditure, were suddenly resumed, and frantic appeals made for money on any terms. The Russians flatly refused to give a penny for military expenditure, which forces one to remark incidentally that this refusal, to the ordinary mind, meant that they had no desire to take the Shah's side. By the time the Bakhtiari advance-guard had reached Kum the Revolutionaries were once more at Kazvin, declaring their intention of joining hands with the Bakhtiaris.

The Legations now stepped in, and the British and Russian Consuls-General at Isfahan were instructed to follow Sirdar Assad. After a two-hundred-mile drive they caught him at Kum and urged him to refrain from complicating a situation that promised satisfactorily. They ultimately warned him that his action was displeasing to the Powers, and was imperilling the cause he professed to have at heart. Their language was not without effect, though no definite reply was elicited beyond the stock phrases about the Constitution. Their duty performed, the Consuls then returned to Isfahan, Mr Grahame lucky to get back safely, for when entering Kum two shots

were fired into his carriage, by whom was never discovered. Meanwhile the Government made various dispositions with the troops available. Those at Kashan were recalled and others sent to meet them from Teheran. Two bodies of Bakhtiari reinforcements were also on the move, so that altogether there appeared to be some six separate forces upon the roads between Teheran and Isfahan, three belonging to one side and three to the other. It may be regarded as a triumph of Persian strategy that they all succeeded in avoiding each other. By this time the Revolutionaries had marched out of Kazvin, supported by Persian allies supposed to bring their force up to 1400, and taken up a position within forty miles of the capital.

These events filled Teheran with excitement. Ministerial changes took place with a rapidity and an unaccountableness that one can only compare with the running of *petits chevaux*. Nationalists and Royalists alike flocked to the British and Russian country villages, where the Legations were in summer quarters, to take refuge from unknown dangers. Wonderful rumours of great tribal movements in the south continually reached us. A circular from the Revolutionaries to all the Legations in Teheran created some uneasiness among Europeans, for it implied that if Russian officers fought with the Cossack Brigade foreigners in general would no longer be regarded as inviolable. But as the Cossack Brigade was looked upon by Europeans as the only real element of security in a delicate situation, withdrawal of its Russian officers was not to be thought of. Without the Russian officers the Brigade would be merely Persian. Needless to say, the question of bringing Russian troops upon the scene was again under discussion; and although I believe I am correct in supposing it was Sir George Barclay's



opinion that their presence was not essential to European security, the responsibility of pressing that view on the Foreign Office was too great to be taken, so that eventually the British Government acquiesced in the Russian plan of sending a force to watch the situation from Kazvin.

On the last day of June the Bakhtiari advance-guard marched out of Kum, not towards Teheran, but by a north-westerly route which indicated their intention to effect a junction with the Revolutionaries. The seriousness of this step could not be overlooked, and once more the Legations endeavoured to stop the advance by despatching officials to meet the leaders of both parties and to warn them that the Powers might find it necessary to intervene. No definite reply was obtained from Sirdar Assad, but Sipahdar on behalf of the Revolutionaries submitted a list of demands, some of which the Legations regarded as so unreasonable that they replied that they had not thought it worth while laying them before the Shah. The threat of the intervention of Russian troops having now been made, the Legations had nothing more to say, and announced their intention of holding no further communication with the advancing forces. It was hoped that their warnings would bear fruit, and an event which had already occurred suggested that the Nationalist leaders had received a check which might make them think twice before proceeding to extremities. This consisted of a fight in which the Nationalists had been defeated. Part of the arrangements for the defence of Teheran included the occupation of the Kherraj Bridge, a structure crossing a small river thirty miles west of Teheran. The Bakhtiari movement from the south making the retention of this position undesirable, the Russian officer in command of the Cossack detachment in



occupation ordered a withdrawal to the caravanseraï of Shahabad, a point previously determined upon. This movement being interpreted by the Revolutionaries as a retreat, a considerable body followed and attacked. They burnt their fingers, however, lost several men and a gun, and were forced to retire. This action, apparently unpremeditated on both sides, was not important except in so far as it suggested that the Persian Cossack Brigade, of whose loyalty some doubt had been entertained, was prepared to do its duty in defence of the Shah. As Nationalist hopes were founded to some extent on the belief that the Royalist troops did not want to fight, proof that they were must have been disappointing.

With the belligerents now located within reach of Teheran I was able to take a more active share in the proceedings, and henceforward propose to deal with events more in the form of a personal narrative.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE FIGHTING OUTSIDE TEHERAN.

My good friend Mr Yantchevetsky of the 'Novoe Vremya' wrote to me on the evening of 6th July that a night attack upon the detachment of Persian Cossacks at Shahabad was imminent. He and young Krinsky of the 'Russki Slovo' were off at twelve, and they begged the pleasure of my company. I received this note at 11.40, just when I was about to go to bed, wearied after a trying day in the heat of Teheran. The heavy pall of dust that hangs over the city in summer was slowly sinking to earth, and as I looked out across the Gun Square from the exquisitely ornamented verandah of the Imperial Bank, I saw the night to be a lovely one, cool with a soft breeze from the dimly outlined Elburz range which towers above the Persian capital, brilliantly lit by a bright moon that made a wonderful lattice of black and white on the curious, painted buildings of the artillery barracks. In a raucous voice that rang clear in the night, a drunken soldier was telling a noisy comrade how his behaviour was dragging his mother's father from the grave. Every minute or two the sound of a shot broke the stillness, fired somewhere in the town, for

what reason it was impossible to tell. Perhaps the owner of a rifle had been looking upon the wine of Shiraz, perhaps some one was explaining to a friend the mechanism of a revolver, perhaps another was timid coming home among the shadows, and wanted a noise for company. Firearms to a Persian are like matches to a small child in Europe—things to play with, to let off, half by accident, half by intention, that his mother and sisters may see how brave he is. But this very inconsequence of the gentle Persian in the matter of shooting has its terrors for the cautious. That very evening I had driven along the city wall and seen hundreds of volunteers manning the ramparts to guard against an attack from the wild riders of Bakhtiari-land, or from the equally wild bomb-throwers of the Caucasus. A Persian volunteer is usually a person of no property, of no morals, of no courage. But he loves to finger ready money, and has thirsted all his life to possess a weapon. And so at this time of crisis several cartloads of rifles had been doled out to the vagabonds of the town on condition that they defended the capital to the last drop of their blood. On their honour they would, and took the rifles. Had not God given them legs as a protection against danger? and when the Bakhtiari came could they not run—and be the richer for the gun and the cartridges?

Leaving the city at twelve in the night meant running the gauntlet of these brave people. I had indeed little stomach for the adventure, for I had small faith in the night attack, and less desire to be there if such a thing occurred. In broad daylight a war correspondent posted upon a high hill, and looking down upon a battle, is an ornament to his trade and a joy to his readers; but in the dark of the night his place



is bed, and his duty the dreaming of bloody dreams. As I pondered the matter there arose a commotion at the other side of the square. There was a jingling of harness, a banging of doors, the shouting of men engaged in breathless labour. Presently there came a loud order, followed by the noise of heavy vehicles moving. And then the square was filled with the roar of massive wheels—surely there is no other sound in the world like the deep solemn rumble of artillery. As they debouched from the shadows of the trees into the light of a great lamp the teams were plunging and swerving, the horses fresh and excited. But as they crossed the square the drivers steadied them and they dashed through the great gateway almost beneath me at a swinging trot, the gunners clinging tightly to their seats as the swaying carriages bumped over the rough ground. Leaning over the verandah, I saw the light gleam for a moment on the long barrel of one of the guns. These were no old-fashioned pieces, but the real modern article, Liakhoff's babies, the quick-firing Creusots, of which Persia possesses but a single battery. There was business afoot. When Yantchevetsky arrived a little later I was ready, for even the oldest and weariest war-horse can be fired by the signs of battle.

My two friends came in a little hired carriage driven by a half-bred Russian from the Caucasus. The latter spoke both Persian and Russian, and as Yantchevetsky knew English we were all able to communicate freely with each other, and would be also with any friends or enemies we might encounter. The Caucasian whipped up his ponies and I mounted my horse, and we were off into the *ewigkeit*. We went without permission from the military authorities, the city was alive with irresponsible soldiery, a battle was

expected that night at our destination, and everybody predicted that both Bakhtiaris and Revolutionaries would outflank the opposing forces and deliver an attack directly upon the town. If popular opinion was worth anything we were much more likely to meet enemies than friends. I had pleaded for half an hour that very afternoon with Colonel Liakhoff to let me go, but had been refused permission. And now we were off where responsible people said it was madness to go. In the carriage my Russian friends were as cheery as crickets, but alone on the horse I was a broken, half-hearted creature.

Our first difficulty occurred at the gate of the square. Bakshish, however, won the way, and we got through. Then we entered the Cossack parade-ground, to find the outlet closed and Cossack sentries who resolutely turned us back. Then I discovered that my horse was dead lame. It seemed a fine excuse to turn back, but my companions declined to be deserted, and they gave the animal to a gendarme to take back to its stable and made room for me in the carriage. Company made me feel bolder. Foiled in leaving the city in the proper direction, we drove north to a gate that we hoped would not be so jealously guarded. By aid of bakshish, soft-sawder, and the exhibition of papers that had no earthly connection with the matter in hand, we got out at the Baghi-shah gate, only to find ourselves in the arms of a picket that took us for Revolutionaries and looked carefully in the carriage for bombs. Oblation to the great god Bakshish saved us, and we proceeded. Our road ran below the ramparts for a mile and then struck west from the Kazvin gate. That mile I knew would be a hateful experience; and so it was, for at every two hundred yards orders to stop were yelled to us out of the shadows. At first



we complied, and were duly mulcted. My Russian friends began to think it a joke, however, and ordered the coachman to drive on, while I was begging him for God's sake to halt. Every moment I expected a volley, and so did the coachman, but every time he slackened young Krinsky thumped him on the back and shouted delightedly to go on. He answered the sentries in fluent cursing in their own language, and roared with laughter as their ravings died away behind us. Near the Kazvin gate lurking figures pointed their rifles at us and the horses' heads were seized. After half an hour's parley, and a terrible waste of loose silver, we were free to take the desert and meet whomsoever we might. With the fear of the Bakhtiari in my heart, it seemed to me but an escape from the frying-pan into the fire.

During the sixteen miles' drive to Shahabad we halted many times to reconnoitre. Flaming bonfires on the southern horizon suggested the camp-fires of the invading armies. Dark bodies on the road ahead might easily have been horsemen, though they always turned out to be donkeys laden with forage going to the city. Once we ran fairly into an ambuscade, which proved to be no more than a caravan resting for the night. The moon created a thousand dark terrors for us, and we were nervously weary when the first signs of dawn lightened the sky and showed the great caravanserai where the Cossacks were camped. The outposts made no difficulty, and we were soon inside a large square full of picketed horses and prone figures. Captain Peribinozeff (*break the nose*, it means in Russian) crawled out from under his mosquito net to receive us. His orderly provided tea, and we were soon made aware that there had been no fighting and that none was now expected. Nevertheless there was



a continuous going and coming of patrols, everywhere the figures of sentries were silhouetted against the sky, and behind a huge hole in the western wall rested the long grey Creusot gun that had helped to beat off the Revolutionaries two nights before. Over the gateway were two Maxims surrounded by a parapet of sand-bags. Everywhere cartridge-cases were littered; ammunition-boxes were piled here and there; stores bulked largely under a tarpaulin. A great gap in the roof of a building showed where a Revolutionary shell had burst; two holes in the adjacent wall told where projectiles had passed through without bursting; the roofs were scored by bullet marks. Three hundred yards away were the mud walls of a garden where the enemy had taken up position, their single mountain-gun on a low tower. In the hurry of retirement they had left their gun, first taking the precaution of throwing the sights into a stream, where they were found next day by the Cossacks.

By six o'clock in the morning we had seen all that was to be seen, and the whole day remained to us. A brilliant thought struck Krinsky—"Why not visit Sipahdar and his Revolutionaries?" Proposed and carried unanimously! Captain Peribinozeff made no objection, our Caucasian driver was a sportsman, and the horses had been well fed. Kherraj Bridge was only fifteen miles distant and the way was simple. Broken to war in South Africa and Manchuria, it did not seem to me to be quite the correct thing—or the safe—to acquire full knowledge of the position and forces of one side, and then to visit the enemy. But my young Russian friends waved their hands at me, and said we were in Persia where everything was upside down. Let us go! And once more we were trotting along the illimitable Persian desert.

Between the last Cossack outpost and the first Revolutionary one was a gap of about eight miles, wherein there tainted the air a few dead horses, and where at one point a broken-down waggon suggested the ravages of war. Then we came to a gay red flag floating boldly in the breeze, and knew ourselves entering the Nationalist lines. We were well past the flag before we saw anybody, and then three men came out of a house, running after us and shouting. They were armed to the eyebrows with rifles, pistols, revolvers, and daggers, and absolutely encased in cartridges of different calibres. They came up panting with the exertion of moving, and demanded to know where we were going. "To see Sipahdar" was quite enough for them, and we were soon bowling along the road once more. We met various buccaneer-like looking gentlemen thereafter, but none tried to stop us. They seemed indeed very mild of countenance despite the bravery of their equipment. Then at the bridge we ran into their camp. Respectable-looking people encrusted with cartridges and strapped up with two rifles lounged about. One of them mounted a horse and intimated his intention to escort us to the presence of the commander. We entered a long avenue of trees, on either side of which rows of horses were picketed. Numerous shaggy ruffians rose to salute as we drove past, their politeness somewhat belying their formidable appearance.

My Russian friends had been there before, and so met with a cordial welcome, in which I was included. Sipahdar occupied a large house that has been a shooting-box of the Shahs of Persia for many generations. He received us in a room from the walls of which looked down the portraits of Fath Ali Shah and his twelve sons. The Revolutionary leader is a little



nervous man with jerky manners, but of dignified appearance and the step of one accustomed to command. About sixty years of age, he is reputed very wealthy, with large possessions in Mazanderan, the proximity of which to Russia is supposed to have made him peculiarly susceptible to Russian influence. This influence was expected to be sufficiently potent to check his advance upon Teheran. Sipahdar's masterful character is evidenced by his having threatened, at the time of the *coup d'état*, to bombard the British Legation if the *bastis* were not handed over to the Shah's mercy.

But it was evident when I saw him that Sipahdar was greatly perturbed by the reported arrival of Russian troops. He gave me the impression of being a man between the devil and the deep sea. Asked what his plans were, he told me that he hoped to meet the Bakhtiari leader in a few days and to discuss whether to take Teheran, or to take Sulatanatabad, where the Shah was in summer quarters, or to cease fighting. Only a few days before he had agreed to come to Teheran, under Russian protection, to make his peace with the Shah. This was not the attitude of a man with a great purpose, and when I telegraphed at night that the landing of the Russian troops had taken the wind out of the Revolutionary sails, I was expressing an opinion for which there seemed ample justification. It must be remarked, however, that though their leader appeared to have little heart for the business, some of the men seemed exceedingly keen. One of them was a young fellow from Tabriz, a nephew of Taghi Zadeh, who knew sufficient English to maintain a stilted conversation. He was what most people would call hot stuff, and one felt that if all the



Persians were like him Persia would be a first-class Power. He was very anxious to know whether the Nationalists would have the right to drag Mohamed Ali out of the Russian Legation, should he take refuge there. I said certainly not, and asked him what sort of justice would it be to deny to the Shah the right to the same *bast* which had enabled the Persians to obtain their Constitution, and of which they made abundant and profitable use during subsequent events. He was rather nonplussed by this answer; but when I followed it up by the inquiry *why* he wanted to get hold of the Shah, he rapped out with incredible fierceness, "To KILL him! To KILL him!" As Ali Mohamed Khan, however, was only a boy, and had been at the American school in Teheran when the Constitutional movement commenced, I did not attach much importance to his vehemence, though I afterwards discovered he was one of the leaders, and possessed of much influence because of his force of character. Subsequent events, of course, falsified my impression that the Revolutionaries were half-hearted, as will appear immediately. The return drive to Teheran, with tired horses, in the desperate heat of the long summer day, is a memory on which I do not care to dwell. We regained the city late in the evening, smothered in dust and wearied to death.

A nose for battle is an indefinable attribute. One does not literally smell war, but none the less one is drawn towards its manifestations by subconscious working of the spirit. My visit to Kherraj had embued me with the idea that since the landing of the Russian troops in Persia the Revolutionaries no longer liked the business. But at last the Nationalist forces had either to do or give up. The

Russians were well on the road to Kazvin, and it seemed that they must interfere to prevent an attack on Teheran, with all its attendant horrors, and its very possible danger to European life and property. On July 8 the Bakhtiari were reported marching northward; the next day the Revolutionaries evacuated Kherraj and marched south to meet their allies. On July 10 there arrived from the south a considerable force of the Shah's soldiers, who were immediately ordered out to the front. On the morning of the 11th I found myself drawn by iron chains in the same direction. I persuaded my Russian friends to accompany me, and within two hours we were in the midst of a battle!

Our first intention on leaving Teheran was to proceed to Shahabad, but some distance out we spied a Cossack riding full tilt across country towards the town. He looked like a despatch-bearer, and proved to be so when we stopped and questioned him. A Cossack detachment with four guns, commanded by Captain Zapolski, was in a village four miles off, busily preparing to move to the attack. We were soon in the village, only to hear that the column had started. We followed, and half an hour later, looking through the glasses, I saw a long flaming line of colour moving across the dazzling white plain in front, and recognised the red cotton tunics of the Brigade. Before we got up the column had disappeared into one of those masses of trees that denote an oasis in the immense Persian desert. And no sooner had it disappeared than the loud roar of artillery followed. We had found the right place at the right moment.

Passing quickly through the gardens we came out on the plain again and found four guns in action,



two quick-firing Creusots and two breech-loaders. Limbers, teams, and waggons were standing about immediately in the rear, as if the column had only halted for a moment to fire. Captain Zapolski was standing on a limber searching the distance with binoculars. Some 5000 yards to the west lay a mass of trees similar to the ones we had just passed through, and standing out in front was a curious mud building that covered the bones of a Musulman saint. Immediately behind the tomb was the village of Badamek on the bank of the Kherraj river. The enemy's main position was in the village, while the tomb and the adjacent buildings were held in force. Of the two mountain-guns in the possession of the Revolutionaries one was placed in the tomb on the left of their position, the other at the southern end of Badamek on their right.

Before giving an account of the action which ensued, it will be best to explain what went before. It appears that as the Bakhtiari with Sirdar Assad marched north from Kum they were closely observed by Amir Mufakham, the loyalist Bakhtiari chief, with a force estimated, according to the degree of one's credulity, at anything between 200 and 20,000. Probably 300 was about the correct number. Amir Mufakham had been skirmishing round his own relations for some days, but on the evening of the 10th, with greatly inferior numbers, he boldly attacked the combined Bakhtiari and Revolutionary forces from the south. He reported great slaughter of his enemies, but in the morning begged for reinforcements as he had been surrounded in the night. The Cossack commander out of his slender resources sent 170 cavalry in the early morning. But Amir Mufakham still reported himself in difficulties, and





*Russian officer watching the bombardment  
of Badamek.*



*Captain Zapolski.*

1884  
August 12

as further reinforcements could not be spared, Major Blazenoff, who was in command, ordered a demonstration by the whole force, with the object of giving relief to his Bakhtiari colleague. This explains why the Cossacks did not move until midday; also why they attacked when the general orders were to remain strictly on the defensive.

From Ahmedabad, where Zapolski's column came into action, to Shahabad, Peribinozeff's camp, is a distance of eight kilometres, spread over a gentle upward slope that enabled a spectator to see every movement. I took up a position on a high wall and obtained an excellent view of the proceedings. Immediately to our left was a body of irregular cavalry keeping touch with Mufakham on the extreme left. Zapolski formed the centre with his men strung out to the north, where, two miles away, they were in touch with Peribinozeff's force, which had advanced south from Shahabad and formed line. The Cossack front was imposing in length, but very thin, while as reserve I could see only a single body of about 100 dismounted horsemen. It was supposed that the enemy numbered at least 2000, and possibly 3000. They were concentrated within a distance of no more than a couple of miles, while the Royalist front extended in a semicircle that might have been ten miles in length, and contained probably no more than 1000 men. It looked as if the Nationalists might easily come out and break the line wherever they chose. To balance things, however, there were with the Cossacks the quick-firing guns and at least three Maxims.

When connection between Zapolski's and Peribinozeff's forces had been established a slight advance took place, and the two Creusot guns from Ahmedabad



changed position and joined the advanced line. The breech-loaders from Ahmedabad, the two Creusots, and a gun from Shahabad then poured a fairly regular fire into the enemy's position, which was answered only by the Nationalist gun from the tomb, until the latter was either silenced or withdrawn, for it proved quite useless at the range. The Cossacks then made a further advance, and immediately there were signs of activity on the Nationalist side. Through the hot tremulous air I could see a thin line of horsemen come galloping forward at high speed. They appeared to halt for a few minutes behind hillocks, and then they retired as quickly as they had come, for apparently they had approached within rifle range of the Cossack right flank. The Cossacks then moved forward again and brought the Creusot guns still further up. After some delay three horsemen detached themselves from the Cossack line and galloped at tremendous speed towards a low hillock within range of the enemy's rifles. There they took cover and dismounted. Cossacks and irregulars now streamed forward in small batches until the little hill was black with figures, and there seemed no more room for the horses.

Once more the Nationalists showed themselves. A long line, numbering anything between 50 and 100, dashed out of the hollow of the river and galloped straight towards the hillock from whence the dismounted Royalists were busily firing. Their objective evidently was a long ruined building 400 yards from the hillock. It now seemed as if the whole of the Royalist forces meant to meet this movement, for there was a general advance, while a whole squadron shot out from the line, and in widely extended order galloped for the ruined building. The Cossacks got there first, and the Nationalists were soon seen stream-

ing back under heavy rifle fire. By this time the Creusot guns were far in advance of their original position, and a Maxim had been sent for, so it really began to look as if the Royalists meant to close on the Nationalist position. At five o'clock, however, after a brisk musketry duel, and some good shooting on the part of the little Nationalist gun, the Cossacks ceased fire and commenced to retire. At the time we could not understand why they failed to press their advantage, but next day we heard that it was because they had succeeded in effecting their object of relieving the Bakhtiari chief on the far left. It was, on the whole, a very interesting little fight, none the less pretty to watch because small damage was done on either side. It suggested that the Cossack Brigade was well in hand, without proving its quality as a fighting unit. As regards the Nationalists, they made no serious effort to counter the demonstration, but their inaction, at the same time, left an impression of a want of determination, which, however, their subsequent behaviour completely belied.

On July 12 the Cossacks did no fighting, but the Bakhtiari and the irregulars were skirmishing throughout the day, and the two breech-loaders at Ahmedabad kept up a desultory fire on the Nationalist position and outposts. Before darkness fell I spent half an hour examining Badamek and its neighbourhood with my glasses. From Shahabad the whole plain was spread out below me, and there was nothing to be seen but a few horsemen widely separated. The dense mass of trees that covered the Nationalist forces showed not a sign of life; and as the sinking sun tinted the distant mountains with colour, and lit up warmly the oases scattered throughout the immense vista of desert that stretched far to the south, this exquisite and peaceful



scene seemed utterly empty of human endeavour. Before turning in for the night I had an interview with the Russian officers. While their own men were keen to attack, and the loyalist Bakhtiari were difficult to hold in check, their orders were to remain strictly on the defensive and not to fight unless attacked. As regards movement on the part of the enemy, they expressed no opinion, and could only say that they were prepared so far as their small numbers permitted.

I spent the night in a house about a mile from the caravanserai occupied by the Cossacks. A little after daylight I went up on the roof and again examined the country and the Nationalist position. As before, there were only visible a few odd horsemen scattered about the plain, and Badamek seemed as quiet as the grave. Then I strolled along to see the Cossack officers, and found great activity and excitement in the camp. Captain Peribinozeff curtly informed me that Sipahdar, with a large force, had passed through the lines in the night and was now in Teheran.

More astonishing news could hardly have met me. The Cossacks had very meagre information, but it was plain that they were packing up to return to Teheran. I lost no time in taking the road for the city. We met *en route* several carts coming from town. None of the people we encountered had heard a whisper of the news. Passing Yaftabad at a distance of about two miles a patrol galloped across to see who we were. They said that Zapolski's outposts had caught four Caucasians wandering about in the night. A few miles further on a Persian officer told us that his patrols had just reported a body of 200 men riding towards Teheran from the north-west. Arrived at the gate of the city, the guards told us that the town was perfectly quiet, and they laughed at the idea of



Sipahdar having arrived. Not until we had penetrated for a mile did we see a sign to suggest any excitement. And then we found ourselves in the thick of things all at once. The gates into the Gun Square were closed, and the sound of intermittent firing rose and fell in gusts. From the north of the town came the rattle of a continuous fusillade. Nobody knew what had happened. I decided to make for the Imperial Bank in the hope of effecting an entrance by a back gate. I got there safely enough, but only by crossing two streets up and down which was passing a continuous stream of whistling bullets.

At the Bank they had definite news. At 6.30, exactly two hours before, the Nationalist forces had ridden quietly in by the Yusafabad gate in the northern ramparts. They had found the gate open and unguarded, and had entered without firing a shot. Some of the Bank officials out for a quiet morning ride had seen about 800 men, and had been told that others were following. So quietly was the entrance effected that an hour later, when the same officials were coming down to the Bank, they actually met a Cossack patrol proceeding on its daily task of riding round the northern quarter of the town. The patrol was marching quietly along, and it never entered the heads of these spectators to suppose that the men were ignorant of the situation. But a volley sent them helter-skelter back to their quarters, minus two of their number.

The story of the extraordinary operation which resulted in the Nationalist forces passing through the Royalist lines and peacefully entering Teheran proves difficult of elucidation. That there was treachery at the Yusafabad gate admits of no doubt. I had personally seen seven of the gates less than three days

before, and at each one a large guard was stationed. When the Nationalists entered, riding in close order as if there was no enemy within a hundred miles, there was not a soul to bar their entrance—so a European eyewitness informed me. As regards slipping through the lines outside the town, it appears that the Nationalists passed between Shahabad and Yaftabad, where Cossack detachments were posted under Peribinozeff and Zapolski. The distance between these two points is about  $7\frac{1}{2}$  miles, or 12 kilometres, of perfectly open country. The Cossack arrangements consisted of outposts close to camp, patrols throughout the night, and a party of irregular cavalry stationed between the two points. When a Cossack patrol reached the irregular cavalry somewhere in the small hours they found them all asleep. As day broke Nationalist stragglers were discovered and the situation was realised. Whether the irregulars deliberately let the Nationalists past, or whether they were really asleep, seems impossible to ascertain. Either assumption in the case of Persian irregulars is perfectly reasonable. While the Russian officers were, of course, responsible for what happened, it is hard to see exactly what more they could have done. There were only three of them, and they were bound to remain with their main bodies. Perhaps they trusted where they ought to have distrusted. Their predicament was that they had to trust all, or none.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## FIRE AND BRIMSTONE.

THE memory of the next few days, during which I enjoyed the hospitality of the Imperial Bank of Persia, will long remain with me. Occupying one side of the Gun Square, which was held by soldiers of the Shah, while the garden and buildings behind the frontage were all more or less within the zone occupied by the Nationalists, the position of the Bank and its inmates, Mr A. O. Wood, the manager; Mr Sydney Rogers, the deputy; Edwards, butler and old soldier; and myself, can only be compared to that of people whose lot it is to be berthed over the screw of a steamer during a violent storm. Any noise, excitement, or emotion that happened to be going came to us. The bankers declined to seek safer quarters, as their first duty was to protect the money-bags, even to the laying down of their lives. My place, of course, was where I could see the most killing and wounding. And as for Edwards, the constant turmoil of battle was as music to his ears, and without him we certainly never should have got anything to eat.

The Square was full of soldiers who from three of the gates kept up a continuous fusilade. Their rifles were of large bore, and their powder black, so that the



din was terrific and the smoke like a foretaste of the Pit. From various points beyond, the gates were being fired at, evidently from small-bore rifles, and the thin singing of the nickelled bullets sounded like the wail of lost souls on the way to damnation. The smack of lead on the adjacent walls was continuous, and every now and then came the blood-curdling scrunch of a bullet in the ironwork of the dome above the hall. In the garden, the tree-tops crackled viciously from the missiles that swept through them, and the leaves and twigs fluttered to earth as if suddenly struck by the decay of autumn. In the midst of such danger we kept well within doors, and indeed avoided even the windows, lest by looking out we might encounter the grim gaze of the destroyer. The first few hours of that experience did us all good. Dormant nerves were waked to their uttermost extremities, and circulation restored where encroaching years had induced a sluggishness of the blood. From being comfortable middle-aged gentlemen, we became perky young fellows, with a hop in our walk and a new light in our eyes. Rejuvenation is the only word to describe the effect upon us of the bombardment outside; and that happy state once attained we were able to take interest and pleasure in all that happened.

We had visitors who came to see if the Bank still existed, and who expressed surprise to find us alive. Their own adventures in coming sounded like pages from a penny dreadful. They reported tremendous firing in various parts of the town, but no real fighting. The Cossacks were in occupation of their own quarters and busily shooting over the walls. The Nationalist forces were hidden in various gardens, and from behind loopholes punched in the soft mud were bombarding nothing in particular. Many private persons were

engaged in rifle practice—from safe cover—under the impression that they were acting as combatants in a fierce battle. Many dogs and cats had been slain, besides a few human beings. One of our visitors was Wahid-ul-Mulk, my Persian colleague, and one of the cheeriest persons in Teheran. He had been to see Sirdar Assad and Sipahdar, and was in a jubilant frame of mind about the Nationalist success. He had been assured that the Nationalist forces were entirely peaceable, and that they would remain on the defensive until attacked. The leaders declared that the greatest care would be taken of foreign life and property. When Wahid-ul-Mulk went out again to watch the fray he was advised to be careful not to get a shot in his locker. Wahid replied that he didn't mind if he did—so long as the bullet was a soft-nosed one.

So accustomed did we become after a time to the streams of lead passing overhead, and to the incessant noise, that we ventured forth to play tennis. I think possibly the play was not up to Wimbledon form, but we managed to get some exercise before Wood ducked his head to avoid a projectile that came whirling through the air with a hum like an aeroplane. When picked out of the hole it made in the court, this turned out to be a Martini bullet that had been splayed on a wall, and when a few more of the same sort came along we thought it better to retire indoors. The banking part of the building was on the ground-floor, and the dwelling part upstairs—the one quite safe, the other comparatively so. But the heat was so great that we preferred to run the risk of being above, where the open windows caught the least breath of air. We ran little danger so long as we kept out of the line of the windows, but that was not always



possible. All the front bedrooms were invaded by bullets, while the verandah was regularly peppered. Considering the indifference we all developed, and the risks we took, wittingly at first, heedlessly afterwards, we had reason to think ourselves lucky in escaping damage.

On the second and third day of the bombardment we were greatly troubled by shell-fire. It appeared that at a point not far away the Shah's soldiers were looting, and that Colonel Liakhoff from the Cossack parade-ground was treating these sinners to shrapnel. At such close range the cases of the shells, after the shrapnel bullets had left them, travelled far, and as the Bank was in the line of fire we got the benefit of them. One whole case entered a room where the archives and old furniture were stored, and the ravages of a bull in a china-shop were as naught to the effect produced. Occasionally the cases were burst in the air by the shrapnel charge, and then we got all the bits in a cluster. Shrapnel bullets were quite thick all over the garden, a shower of them creating considerable damage to the trees. Once when walking along the verandah I heard a whack on the wall beside me, and, looking down, saw sticking in the plaster a little fat bullet that had passed between my legs. In three days Edwards collected enough iron and lead to build a battle-ship.

Our chiefest joy was the man at the gate. A great archway stands at the corner of the Bank, connecting the Gun Square and one of the principal bazaars. This bazaar runs at right angles to the square, and bounds one side of the Bank buildings so that the southern windows all look into it. Bullets fired from the archway, therefore, flew successively past all these windows, while the noise of the shots entered with accumulated





*The Imperial Bank of Persia mirrored in its puddle (see page 175).*



*The Royalist guns bombarding Teheran.*

*(continued)*

insistence. Now the archway is deep and vaulted, and a shot fired from within reverberates like thunder. Moreover, the great iron-bound doors, closed in the circumstances, seemed to gather up the sound and to multiply it tenfold. That is the kind of noise that came into the Bank, and terrible it was. In the beginning it sounded to us like the end of the world. Well, it was the business of a detachment of soldiers to defend that gate, which, of course, meant to shoot from it. As time went on the work appeared to devolve on one particular man, and he interpreted his duty to necessitate a regular and continuous bombardment, directed through a crack in the gate, at man, woman, child, dog, cat, or any moving thing to be seen throughout the length of the street beyond. When he could see nothing moving he fired all the same, just to show, as he explained when I interviewed him, that the garrison was awake. He was indeed a faithful servant; and when I asked him one evening how things were going for the Shah, he replied that Providence had been on their side up to then, but who could tell what might happen in the night.

Now the Bank was so placed, facing Royalist ground and backing on to Nationalist, that people passing from one side to the other found it convenient to come our way, so that we had several visitors engaged in diplomatic negotiations between the two camps. Moreover, through the Bank was the easiest way to the telegraph office. The Manager and his Deputy, being hospitable souls, bade many of the passers-by to break bread with us. At first our visitors sat in the great salon, where the firing outside and the continual thunderous explosions made them think the Bank a very hot place. But when we took them into the dining-room, whose windows looked into the



street, that was beyond the gate, that stood under the archway, that contained the man that fired the gun, they fairly trembled with apprehension. At the first shot, BANG! like the crack of Doom, it was a jump and a turning pale; at the second appalling discharge, a standing-up and a gasp for breath; and at the third crash, a complete collapse. Taking no notice of these manifestations, although the whole building was quivering and vibrating as from an earthquake, we of the house would go on with our lunch as if nothing was happening. If the guest stammered out that the Bank was being attacked, we merely expressed mild surprise, and said we had become so accustomed to this sort of thing during the last forty-eight hours that we hardly noticed the noise at all. If the man at the gate slacked off at any time we had only to send him out a glass of tea, when he immediately resumed work. The gift of a kran set him blazing away with the speed of a Maxim. It was a cruel way of entertaining people, but I am sure no hospitality in the world was ever so eloquently rewarded.

The despatch of a telegram after dark was a difficult business, though the telegraph office was scarce two hundred yards distant. But the way thither included the skirting of one gate and the passing through another. The guard at each point were in such fear of assault that they sat all night with their fingers glued to the triggers of their rifles. If a beetle buzzed into an eye, a rifle went off; if a bat swished through the air, there was a salvo; while if a living figure moved within the range of vision, it was battled upon with lead from all round the Square. And so to send my simple little messages, that were hardly glanced at the following morning by several hundred thousand

readers, it was necessary gently to summon the sentry near the iron grill of the Bank doorway, and with the greatest caution to institute a queue of soldiery that should stretch all the way to the telegraph office, and thereby give passage from hand to hand of the precious document. While these brave fellows were holding on to each other they were confident, but if they happened to separate they might begin to shoot. Their anxiety seemed exaggerated, but on the second night of the trouble, while we were indulging in a rubber of bridge, there occurred what all were expecting. A bomb exploded in a corner of the Square with a detonation that appalled us all. We had become pretty well inured to violent sound, but this one was overwhelming. It was followed by deathly silence for a few seconds, and then another explosion rent the air, again followed by silence. At last came the firing, a burst of it that set the air fiercely throbbing and brought the sweat to our brows. We thought it was the expected Nationalist attack on the Square, preceded by the bursting of the bombs that are the favourite weapons of the Caucasians. The bombs had been fired surely enough, but no attack followed, the firing died away, and we resumed the game, confessedly shaken and trembling. I know I doubled no trumps shortly afterwards, so inopportunistly that we lost a little slam. But I think those two crashes, followed by the roar of musketry, would have unnerved Satan himself.

As may be imagined, I made various expeditions abroad. It was safe enough hugging the walls and keeping within narrow lanes. Cross-roads were dangerous, and proved the undoing of many a non-combatant. The trouble was that one had to walk in the desperate heat of summer along these inter-



minable streets. Carriages had vanished, and to ride a horse would have been to invite destruction. One of my first visits was to the Legation, where a hospital had been opened for the wounded, and where several hundred Armenians had taken refuge, as well as a few British residents driven from their houses by artillery fire. The trees of the garden were being continually flicked by passing bullets, and several of the houses were thickly marked, and their windows smashed by the same cheerful visitors. On the lawn before the Minister's door a figure lay prone, unconsciously moaning, waiting for the death that no medical aid could avert. Another poor creature had had his lower jaw and tongue cut clean away by a ricochetting bullet. Outside the Legation walls several dead men were lying, and the house of the Director of the Telegraph Department was wrecked by shells. In the telegraph office itself the clerks stuck to their work under most difficult circumstances, some of them unable to get near their homes, and having to sleep night after night at the office without proper food or refreshment. On the verandah outside the windows behind which they worked a barricade of heavy packing-cases protected them from the flying bullets that poured into the building.

On the way back I got mixed up with a fight in the Ala-ed-Dowleh, the street of the Legations. A party of Caucasians and Armenians darted past, taking cover in doorways and behind trees as they advanced. They got within close range of the Cossack lines, against which they directed a heavy rifle fire, followed by a deluge of Mauser pistol bullets. A fierce return fire forced them to retire, for which I was thankful, as watching this sort of work was attended by more danger than the excitement was worth. The next



morning, after paying a visit to the Nationalist leaders, I again found myself in a warm corner. As I left the Mejliss buildings I got involved in a crowd of *fidais* rushing up a street, at the top of which heavy firing was proceeding. A few minutes later I found myself crouching in a *sangar* thrown up on the roof of a house, and occupied by some twenty wild and shaggy Bakhtiari. They were shooting down a broad street at the end of which lay a deserted gun. Round the gun were several dead bodies. From the window of one of the rooms below us a brass gun was belching forth flames. All around was a horde of *fidais* who kept up a vigorous fire. The Bakhtiari were madly excited, for they had driven the gunners from the piece in the distance. They borrowed my glasses and yelled with delight when they looked through them. Then they resumed firing and cleaning out their old gas-pipes, which would not work unless frequently treated with ramrods and rags. All the while I could see nothing but the corpses near the gun, though the fact that a poor fellow near by was shot through the chest proved that the enemy, who were loyalist tribesmen, were busy behind adjacent walls. That quarter of an hour with the Bakhtiari was a period of pure emotion which I do not want to repeat more often than is absolutely necessary.

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE NATIONALIST TRIUMPH.

THE situation in the town was extraordinarily difficult to understand at the time, though subsequently explanation was forthcoming. On entering in the early morning the Nationalists rode straight to Baharistan and took up their quarters in and around the Mejliiss buildings. On the way they shot a couple of soldiers in the guard-house opposite the gate of the British Legation, but otherwise made a perfectly peaceful entrance. Meanwhile the main body of the Cossack Brigade, under Liakhoff, and numbering about 400 men, were in occupation of the Brigade headquarters about a mile distant. Adjacent was the Royal Palace enclosure and the Gun Square, occupied by a regiment of regulars and a number of volunteers. In the course of the morning Liakhoff was reinforced by the return of Zapolski with 400 Cossacks and part of the loyal Bakhtiari. In effect the northern portion of the city was held by the Nationalists, while the centre and the west remained in the hands of the Royalists. It was open to both sides freely to come and go by the gates in their respective zones.

Throughout the first day both sides were completely inactive, though enough ammunition was burnt to

make a Manchurian campaign. I imagine it is nearly correct to say that hitherto nobody was killed or wounded in direct fighting, unless the shooting of the two guards and the surprise of the Cossack patrol may be so considered. But damage to non-combatants, and of course to those engaged, by spent bullets was considerable, several women losing their lives. On the second day the Shah, who remained in his summer quarters at Sultanatabad, seven miles distant, commenced an attack on the Nationalists. Peribinozeff, who with the Cossacks and artillery from Shahabad had joined the Shah instead of returning to Teheran, took up a position on the low hills at Kasra Kajar, three miles to the north-east, and shelled the Mejliss buildings and the adjacent gate. Liakhoff supported this fire by a bombardment from the Brigade headquarters, while a body of tribal levies attacked the northern ramparts. Peribinozeff's fire, at the range, was quite ineffective, while that from the Brigade headquarters was even more so, as, owing to the intervening buildings, there was no mark to aim at. The tribal force failed in an attempt to capture one of the gates, but a party of 70 Silahoris, who had entered by a gate at the north-eastern corner of the town the night before, took up a position in a garden within 200 yards of the Mejliss, which they held throughout, though completely isolated. These were the people who had lost the gun, and the fighting with whom I witnessed from the Bakhtiari *sangar*. It was here that the only casualties worth mentioning occurred, about a dozen of the Silahor tribesmen being killed outright. Being unsupported from outside they were caught in a trap. The Shah's attack was a miserable *fiasco*. It was badly directed, and quite unsupported by the Cossack Brigade, except by useless artillery



fire, and was doomed to failure. The Nationalists had only to sit behind walls and do a little shooting to maintain their position. For a time, however, they were extremely anxious about the result, and there is no doubt that co-operation by all the Royalist forces, and a concerted endeavour to surround the Nationalists, would have put the latter in a precarious position. The Nationalists, it may be mentioned, received little support from the townspeople, except from the Armenians, a good number of whom turned out and took a share in what fighting there was. On the other hand, the Nationalists made an extremely clever entry into the town, the movement being boldly conceived and brilliantly executed. It would have been impossible in real warfare, though that does not detract from the credit due to the Nationalists. Their mistake was in aiming at Teheran instead of at Sultanatabad, where the Shah was. Their sudden movement brought them within a few miles of his residence; half an hour's trotting would have taken them to a point where he would have been cut off from all the foreign Legations and thus lain completely at their mercy. Probably the Nationalists shrank from the opposition that they must have encountered from the soldiers surrounding the Shah, and their own contention must be recognised that they had no desire to fight, but merely to force compliance with their wishes. But it would have saved endless troubles and complications, as well as expense, if they had captured Mohamed Ali and squared accounts with him on the spot.

After the failure of his attack Mohamed Ali threw up the sponge and took refuge in the Russian Legation, telegraphing the Czar that he put himself and his family under the protection of Russia. The preliminaries to that step are interesting, as is the action

taken by the Legations at this moment of crisis. When the Shah commenced to bombard the town, or rather two well-defined points in it widely separated from the European quarter, Sir George Barclay and M. Sabline posted off from their own summer residences, which were close at hand, to remonstrate with his Majesty and to request a truce for negotiations. The Shah complained that the Legations had continually tied his hands, and that now he was actually being attacked it was impossible for him to make a truce unless the Nationalists laid down their arms. Talk of conciliation proved useless, for it was evident that the Shah meant to make this single bid for victory and then to retire altogether from the contest if he failed. Simultaneously with this attempt to arrange a truce a joint deputation from the two Legations was sent to recommend the same course to the Nationalist leaders, but was unable to enter the town on account of the fighting. The same day, and *before* it became apparent that the Shah's attack had failed, a most significant move was made by the Russian Legation. This was no less than the despatch of an attaché to open negotiations with the Nationalist leaders for the surrender of the Cossack Brigade. Certain terms were offered on the afternoon of the second day's fighting, which were not thought sufficient by the Legation, and which were the subject of a further communication to the Nationalists on the third day,—a communication which did not reach its destination, however, as its bearer was prevented by the fighting from entering the town. It might be remarked that passing in and out of the gates was throughout a hazardous business, owing to the irresponsibility of the defenders, who usually interpreted their duty to be to shoot at everything and anybody in sight. On the fourth day, when



the attaché endeavoured to carry out his mission, he found that Colonel Liakhoff had already settled the matter the previous day, and had agreed to cease fighting. The very next morning the Shah took *bast*. It is impossible, from these facts, to overlook that the Russian Legation was in a great hurry to make terms for the Brigade irrespective of its duty to the Shah. Considering that in efficiency the Brigade stood head and shoulders over any of the other forces engaged, and was, moreover, led by European officers who understood their business, it is obvious that it ought to have made a very good show; instead of which it did practically nothing from beginning to end of the fighting except to make a defence when attacked at Shahabad. The deduction to be made from the handling of the Brigade is that the Russian Government had no desire to maintain Mohamed Ali on the throne, and that they were only too glad to get him into *bast* without the Russian officers becoming involved in the fighting in the manner which created such a hubbub in the summer of 1908. With the approval, expressed or tacit, of their Government, it is my conviction that the Russian officers might have managed the situation so as to have ensured a different result.

But it was never meant that they should do anything of the kind, as may be deduced from other occurrences. As already mentioned, the Russian Government, with the acquiescence of the British, had decided to bring troops upon the scene. Considering the character of the Nationalist forces, Bakhtiari tribesmen who were champions in brigandage—that implies no reproach in Persia—and Revolutionaries led by dare-devils who had helped to keep the Caucasus in ferment, and were known to nurse the deepest hatred of things and people Russian, Russia requires no excuse for having



taken steps to ensure protection of European life and property. It certainly turned out that both elements among the Nationalists behaved in an exemplary manner, and that no reproach of any kind can be levelled at them on the score of their conduct of the fighting. But I think that most Europeans in Teheran would admit that the thought of the Russian troops watching proceedings at Kazvin, only three days' march away, was distinctly comforting. And I think if they had not been there the victors would have handled some of the vanquished much more roughly than they did. The chances against disaster in this life are usually pretty small, but one observes that insurance to cover risks is becoming increasingly popular. The interesting thing to note in connection with the Russian troops is that every Russian in Teheran implored the Legation to order them from Kazvin to Teheran, and that nearly all of the foreigners except the British pestered M. Sabline to do the same on the ground that there was danger to foreigners. The situation was unquestionably alarming, and there would have been no shadow of ground for complaint if both Legations had agreed that the troops ought to come. But both M. Sabline and Sir George Barclay were satisfied that foreigners had nothing to fear. M. Sabline, under whose orders the Kazvin column was, therefore abstained from making the signal, despite the protests, even insults, of his compatriots. Incidentally, I wonder if these two gentlemen would have been quite so steadfast if they had lived through those four days' fighting in Teheran itself, instead of in the quiet groves of Shimran. I think our Man at the Gate, could he have had Sir George and his colleague bottled up in the Bank dining-room for a few minutes, would have moved those troops in double-quick time. The

happiness of such an experiment, however, though we tried hard to compass it, was denied us, as the Ministers were much too busy in the country to come down to see the fun. Stirring accounts of the titanic conflict that was proceeding reached them periodically, but they refused to be moved from their determination on the subject of the troops. It was a very high trial for so young a diplomatist as M. Sabline, and one which he came through with flying colours. Nor must one forget that M. Isvolsky stood fast upon the advice of his *chargé d'affaires*, and declined to be influenced either by alarms from Teheran or by reactionary pressure at home. The firmness of Sir George Barclay at the moment when his responsibility was greatest contributed substantially to the satisfactory issue. Nor should it be omitted that the calmness of the British community, not one of whom—man, woman, or child—left Teheran, constituted valuable support to the joint policy of non-intervention. If British subjects had wavered Sir George Barclay would have been compelled to assent to the bringing of the Russian troops, when a dangerous situation might have arisen, calculated to destroy for ever the policy pursued by both Powers. In their triumphal temper the Persians would have deeply resented foreign interference, and an irretrievable disaster might have resulted from the appearance on the scene of the Russian column.

By taking sanctuary the Shah virtually abdicated, whereafter further hostilities became superfluous. The first thing to be done was to arrange a meeting between Colonel Liakhoff and the Nationalist leaders, and this was effected in the afternoon through the instrumentality of the Legation secretaries. It was settled that a Bakhtiari chief should come for him



*Sir George Barclay and M. Sabline take the Persian situation very seriously.*



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to the Imperial Bank, and thereafter escort him to Baharistan. This part of the proceedings gave rise to an exciting incident. Colonel Liakhoff arrived at the Gun Square entrance and was duly brought upstairs, where he was good enough to sign his name on the shell that he had sent to us so unceremoniously two days before. Not long afterwards the Bakhtiari chief, with an escort of Caucasians and Bakhtiari, arrived at the back entrance. Almost at this moment one of the gates of the Square was opened to let Colonel Liakhoff's empty carriage pass out, whereupon a *seyd* rushed through and was immediately shot dead by one of the soldiers—my Man with the Gun, I shall always believe. Tremendous excitement followed, and firing broke out in all directions. The Nationalist escort in the garden deployed and advanced upon the Bank in skirmishing order. A fight seemed imminent, and for the moment interested witnesses thought there was treachery afoot. Fortunately Colonel Liakhoff was able to reassure the soldiers from the balcony, and peace was restored. He then drove off with the Bakhtiari chief, escorted only by his late enemies, his own men having been ordered to wait. When the pair, both tall, handsome men, marched amicably into the Mejliss enclosure they were loudly cheered by a huge crowd. It was by this time arranged that Sipahdar was to be Minister for War, under whose orders henceforth, according to the terms arranged, the Brigade was to be. Liakhoff was requested by his new chief to continue to maintain order in the city as before, and after a satisfactory interview left amid an enthusiastic scene. Shortly afterwards an Extraordinary National Council formally deposed the Shah and appointed his little son, Sultan Ahmed, in his

stead, under a Regent. Sirdar Assad was made Minister of the Interior, and various members of a Cabinet appointed. These formalities completed the Nationalists' triumph and gave them what they wanted—a new Government without Mohamed Ali.

What meant triumph to the Nationalists brought woe to the Shah's household. Warning of his intended flight had reached the Russian Legation the previous evening, and in the morning the white bungalow of the Minister, then vacant, was ready for its royal occupants. The Queen and her women arrived first, accompanied by several carriages containing servants and baggage. Shortly afterwards Madame Sabline, who occupied another house, went to visit her guest, and found the Shah, who with his two sons had just arrived on horseback, busily drying the Queen's eyes with a handkerchief, and comforting her after the manner of more humble folk in domestic affliction. The Shah apologised for his wife's weakness, and explained that the delay in the coming of the riding-party had frightened her into thinking that they had been killed on the way. The Shah appeared to accept his changed position with Oriental philosophy, and showed no lack of the personal dignity becoming to a monarch. He and his family received all the attention possible in the circumstances, while their safety was watched over by a guard of Russian Cossacks and Indian sowars. Above the door of the Legation were crossed the flags of Russia and Great Britain.

It was soon announced to the Shah that the Provisional Government desired to send a delegation to announce his deposition, but Mohamed Ali replied that that was unnecessary, as he considered that by taking protection under a foreign flag he had forfeited



the Throne. The Government at the same time notified the nomination of the new Shah, and desired that Sultan Ahmed should be delivered into their keeping. This request was conveyed by M. Sabline to the ex-Shah, who replied that he thought the boy's mother would not consent. The ex-Shah then took M. Sabline to the Queen, and an affecting scene ensued. Both the mother and father broke down at the thought of parting with their favourite son, and offered their second in his place. M. Sabline replied that the selection had been made by the people, and that he had no voice in the matter. The boy himself wept bitterly in sympathy with his parents and declined to leave his mother. Finally their Majesties were persuaded to agree, whereupon arrangements were made for the reception by the Regent and a Nationalist deputation. Next morning an interested crowd witnessed the little Shah's departure from the custody of his natural guardians. During the morning Sultan Ahmed wept bitterly at the prospect of becoming a king, and it required a stern message to the effect that crying was not allowed in the Russian Legation before he dried his eyes. Then the little man came out bravely, entered a large carriage and drove off alone, escorted by Cossacks, sowars, and Persian Cossacks, and followed by a long string of carriages. At Sultanatabad he was met by the Regent and ceremoniously notified of his high position, and of the hope entertained by the nation that he would prove to be a good ruler. "In sh'Allah, I will," replied the lad.

Teheran after its baptism of fire presented an appearance little different from the normal. A few telegraph-poles were down and the wires trailing in the streets, several corners were decorated with ruined *sangars*, a few dead horses and defunct pariah dogs tainted the

air. The shell and rifle fire on the mud walls and ramshackle architecture of the city had left but few marks, considering the enormous expenditure of ammunition. Hardly had the firing ceased than the tramways resumed work, carriages began to ply for hire, and the shops to open. Bakhtiaris and Revolutionaries patrolled the streets, while Persian Cossacks and other Royalist soldiers walked about and appeared to fraternise with the visitors with whom only the day before they had been engaged in mortal combat. One of my earliest visits was to the little shop of a one-armed Frenchman who, I had been told, had been killed in the fighting. But there he was, fresh as a daisy, and bleeding like a pig from an open wound in the back of his head, inflicted by an enemy that morning he explained, while stanching the blood with a handkerchief. I begged him at once to jump into my carriage and come to a doctor, but he most airily declined any assistance. As his scalp was gaping wide for an inch and a half where it had been slit by the bullet, and his clothes were drenched with blood, I momentarily expected to see him drop down in a faint; but he continued gaily to recount his experiences during the siege, as if the wound was a trifle not worth considering. He told me how he had spent the time with his head through an opening in the roof busily shooting anything he could see. He claimed to have killed sixteen men and wounded nearly fifty, and got tremendously excited as he described the circumstances. His principal victims were members of the looting parties shelled by Colonel Liakhoff, whereby it seemed that his bloodthirstiness had been exercised in a good cause. But he went on to say that he had killed all sorts, Cossacks, sarbasses, Bakhtiari, Revolutionaries, mullahs, seyds, and Heaven knows whom else, whereat

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*The Peacock Throne in the Palace at Teheran.*



*The Takht-i-Marmar (Throne of Marble) in the Palace at Teheran.*

I began to think my friend slightly touched in his upper storey. He finally begged me to accompany him to the back of his shop, where—having one arm, let it be recollected—he caught hold of a curiously wire-bound zinc cylinder and tossed it into the air. Catching it in his only hand he threw it up again, and joyfully exclaimed that this was a bomb that he had stolen from a Caucasian! . . . I was out of that shop like a streak of lightning, and off down the street as if the devil were behind. Nothing happened, but I venture the opinion that there are few things in the world more likely to alarm a quiet man than to find himself in the company of a delirious maniac who plays ball with a bomb powerful enough to hoist a fortress. The poor Frenchman's tale was indeed true, and for his share in the shooting a determined attempt had been made that morning to murder him. Always eccentric, the events of the past few days had upset his mental balance, and the French Legation at once made arrangements for his deportation to France.

Success having been achieved, the Nationalists transferred their headquarters from Baharistan to the Royal Palace, whose sacred precincts thereafter became open to the populace. Here assembled penitents, flatterers, and office-seekers waiting for the crumbs that might drop from the table of the new rulers. Among them were many of the old reactionary gang, unabashed and unashamed, and it says much for the magnanimity of Persian character that they were not repulsed. The new Cabinet was soon completed, and among other appointments made was that of Ephraim, an Armenian, to be Chief of Police. I have been informed on good authority that this man, a Russian Armenian, has had a remarkable career, having been exiled to Siberia for his share in revolutionary troubles in Tiflis some years

before. From Siberia he had escaped, and found his way to Resht, there to engage upon the commonplace business of brick-making. The movement initiated from Resht proved too much for his revolutionary instincts, and he forthwith joined Sipahdar, and thereafter became the leading spirit in the events which culminated in the Nationalist success. In introducing this fearless and determined man to the notice of the reader it will be appropriate to explain more fully his share in the development of the situation.

It is obvious that the soldiers of fortune, of which the Revolutionary force was principally composed, must have been greatly disappointed by the disappearance of their *raison d'être* when Mohamed Ali Shah gave way on the Constitutional question in consequence of the action of the Powers at Tabriz. They had had an infinitely pleasant time at Resht and Kazvin, living on contributions from the people, forced, in many instances, by the threat of assassination. Moreover, a taste for strutting in the public eye once acquired was not easily relinquished, nor was it pleasant to sacrifice the dream of the conquest of Teheran. Among them were some of the fiery Azerbaijan spirits who had fought on the day of the bombardment of the Mejliss and killed so many Cossacks. These were led by my friend Ali Mohamed Khan, and they to a man wanted the blood of the Shah and the complete overthrow of autocracy. The Caucasian members of the force, Christian and Mohammedan, were all desperate haters of Russia, and prepared for any policy which they thought embarrassing to their enemy. The Armenians in particular had a political motive to serve, for life for them in their own country, whether under Turkish or Russian rule, was a perpetual affront to the spirit. A Turkish Armenian once said to me that, despite the terrible



wrongs that his people had suffered at the hands of the Turks, they would sooner live under the Turkish flag than under the Russian, for while the Turks were ruthless in persecution they made no attempt to undermine their individuality as a people, whereas Russia aimed at their national extinction and their conversion to the Greek Church. To keep Persia independent of Russia, and free as a field for Armenian endeavour, is therefore a tangible policy for the thoughtful Armenian. In the same way the Mohammedan element among the Caucasian Revolutionaries was interested in preserving from Russian encroachment a country that afforded it a base for anti-Russian propagandism. An independent, self-governing Persia, then, appealed to all elements; and although it is not suggested that more than the smallest fraction of the force was animated by any political motives at all, it is unquestionable that these were the ideas that inspired the Revolutionary societies of Tiflis, Baku, and Constantinople, who financed the movement at its outset. The collapse of opposition in Teheran, therefore, had the effect of taking the bread out of the mouths of the real movers, and leaving them no excuse for remaining in the field. But many of them had left Russia with "bad" papers, and had little hope of being able to re-enter, so that, with no further prospect of employment in Persia, their situation became exceedingly unfortunate. In these circumstances it was to the interest of the Revolutionary leaders to pursue the original policy of marching to Teheran, whatever might be the situation there.

To do this with any decency, or indeed with safety, it was necessary that the Bakhtiaris should participate. It would never do for outsiders, as they were, to undertake schemes on behalf of Persia in which Persians did not take a leading part. It was for this reason that

Sipahdar had been impressed as their leader and kept at the head of affairs. As a prominent Persian he made a good puppet behind whom the Caucasians could pursue their own ends. It was because Sipahdar appeared to be the head, and because it was not realised that behind him stood a man of Ephraim's calibre, that observers in Teheran were disposed to think the movement lacked purpose. It was a true diagnosis as regards the apparent leader, but his own followers told me after their arrival that when Sipahdar wanted to withdraw altogether on account of Russian warnings, Ephraim and Ali Mohamed Khan repeatedly threatened to shoot him with their own hands if he wavered. Whether that is a true bill or not I cannot say, but from personal knowledge of the three parties concerned I should say the story was extremely probable.

But the Bakhtiaris appeared already to have retired from the contest. When in the beginning of May they had assembled in Isfahan to the number of 2000, they had now melted away, but for a small garrison, to their own country, and were reported bitterly quarrelling among themselves. They had been put to considerable loss by their adventure, and they were disposed to blame Samsam-es-Sultaneh and Sirdar Assad. Moreover, the man who had refused to join them, Amir Mufakham, remained in Teheran with the Shah, and had the Ilkaniship in his pocket. Fortunately for Caucasian plans, the Nationalists in Teheran came to their rescue with loud and bitter complaints of the situation there. Nothing that was done satisfied them, and they spread it over all Persia that Mohamed Ali had brought the Russian troops into the country—the poor man had been ruined by the coming of the Russians!—and that he was hoodwinking the simple Legations, and that the Constitution was no more a



reality than it had been before. Now Sirdar Assad was already sore at the failure of his scheme, and felt balked of the great rôle that he was to have played. When, therefore, there fell upon him the taunts and reproaches and jeers of the Teheranis, and the urgent representations from Sipahdar—*i.e.*, the Caucasians—to gird up his loins, and to let them jointly sweep the Shah off his throne, as the Turkish Nationalists had just done to their Sultan, he was greatly exercised, and by a herculean effort pacified the Khans and brought them once more upon the scene. At the bottom of the Caucasian persistence, both as regards the advance of the Resht force and the reappearance of the Bakhtiaris, was the masterful personality of Ephraim, a modest and unassuming man in appearance, but stout-hearted out of all proportion to his associates. When Sirdar Assad and Sipahdar met near Teheran, and discussed the news of the arrival of the Russian troops for the occupation of the Caspian-Teheran road, they were both, I am assured on good authority, anxious to compromise, and it was only the forcefulness of Ephraim that kept them going. He was in command of the Revolutionaries throughout the fighting outside Teheran, and his was the bold scheme for the joint midnight march upon the capital.

Hitherto it had been a reproach against the Nationalists that they had confined themselves to talk and done little to give their aspirations reality, while it can never be forgotten against them that they made no effort to save Tabriz when a few determined men might have raised the siege. On that account they were themselves to blame for the presence of Russian troops at Tabriz. But, all said and done, there was now no gainsaying the fact that the Nationalist cause had triumphed, although only by the agency of outsiders on the one hand, and tribesmen on the other,



who, with the exception of their leader, had no interest in the question of Constitutional government. Past vacillation was thrown into the shade by present performances, and there was no denying that a situation had been brought about that promised more happily for Persia than any that could have been brought about by foreign advice or agency. The shadow of intervention had long been spreading over the Persian sky, and the day seemed nigh when the shadow must have been followed by something which would have crippled Persian independence. Nothing but Persian activity could have saved the situation, and as that activity had asserted itself at the psychological moment, the direction of events was taken out of foreign hands and rested once more where it ought to rest—with the Persians themselves. Russian intervention at Tabriz, in a manner tantamount to ruination of the Shah's designs, and again her abstention during the advance upon Teheran when the raising of the *chargé d'affaires'* little finger would have brought Russian troops to the capital and saved the situation for Mohamed Ali Shah, conclusively showed that Russia was no implacable foe to Nationalist aims. It seemed, therefore, with England friendly, that the Nationalists now had the game in their own hands. The reactionary power was broken, and must remain in the dust while the Nationalists were firm and careful. Tact and magnanimity had distinguished their actions in their moment of triumph, and there seemed nothing left to the foreigner but to congratulate them and to wish them luck. It was not to be overlooked that rocks and shoals beset their course in the future, but while there were men at the helm who had their country's welfare at heart there was always hope of successful navigation.

## CHAPTER X.

## DIFFICULTIES OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT.

AMONG the many matters requiring attention at the hands of the new Government were three of immediate importance. These were the making of arrangements for the departure of the ex-Shah, the replenishment of the Treasury, and the convocation of the Mejliss. In regard to the last-named, orders were given on 27th July for the holding of the elections, and Sirdar Assad informed me that he hoped Parliament would meet within a month. The deputies for Teheran were actually elected on 19th August, but so dilatory were the methods employed elsewhere that only on 15th November was the Mejliss opened with the barest margin over the necessary quorum of sixty members out of a total of one hundred and twenty. It is instructive to note that the law under which the elections took place was that signed by Mohamed Ali Shah shortly before his downfall, while the fact that three of the Ministers in the new Government formed part of the Cabinet selected by the Shah two months before upon the advice of the Powers, also suggested how nearly the Legations, compatible with the circumstances, had interpreted popular wishes.

The affairs of Mohamed Ali proved very difficult to

arrange, partly because the ex-Shah himself offered considerable obstruction, and partly because the Government dealt with the matter in a somewhat narrow spirit. It was obviously to the Nationalist interest to get rid of Mohamed Ali in the shortest possible space of time, so that his presence in the country should constitute no nucleus for reactionary intrigue. Disputes arose as to the ownership of jewellery, the ex-Shah claiming certain articles as his private property, the Government maintaining that they were appanages of the Crown. Many of the Crown Jewels were missing altogether, and claims for them, and for property in the shape of horses, donkeys, saddles, rifles, and other articles too precious to mention, were presented. Then there was the Shah's debts amounting to some £300,000 to be considered, as well as his private landed property and a pension for his maintenance in Russia. After a long period of wrangling, an arrangement was concluded by which the Government assumed the debts, took over the property, and agreed to pay the Shah a pension of about £20,000, with reduced allowances to his family after his death, and provision for cancellation in case he was at any time proved guilty of intrigue in Persia. On the whole, Mohamed Ali made a pretty good bargain, though it is hardly necessary to state that he was far from satisfied. On 9th September, seven weeks after seeking Russian protection, he left the care of the Legation, bound for his new home near Odessa. The little Persian village, crowded by the escort and the numerous six- and four-horse carriages which were to carry the fallen monarch and his retinue to the Caspian, presented a curious and pathetic scene as the long cavalcade started. Many of the European colony came to see the last of his Majesty, and there were not a few of the ladies moved



to tears. Sir George Barclay's position at this moment was decidedly awkward, for in view of the fact that the Shah regarded him as the principal instrument of his downfall, and had referred to him a few days before as the Angel of Death, it was a little difficult to effect a graceful farewell. In the circumstances there was some excuse for Sir George absent-mindedly whistling the Wedding March while wondering what to do. The Shah, however, solved the difficulty himself by stopping his carriage at the point where the Minister was standing. Leaning out of the window to say good-bye, he gravely thanked Sir George for the trouble he had taken in helping him to settle his affairs.

The question of money, of course, also presented difficulty. To effect a loan without the consent of Parliament would have been unconstitutional, and the Persians at such a moment were so delighted at regaining possession of their Constitution that nothing in the world would have induced them to violate its principles. And so they embarked on a policy of tail-twisting which brought a considerable amount of grist to the mill. A long list of names was published, and opposite each was placed the figure which each person was expected to pay, voluntarily, of course, to the Treasury. At this moment arrived from exile the Zill-es-Sultan, eager to assist in the regeneration of his country. He was surprised to find himself arrested on the way from the Caspian and confronted with a demand for £100,000. He declined to pay, and asked if this was constitutional procedure. A long comedy followed, in which the friends of the Zill loudly complained that he was being starved and tortured. The Legations day by day solemnly remonstrated with the Government, and reminded them of their promise not

to ill-treat his Royal Highness. In their turn the Government repudiated all such intention, and sent peremptory orders to the *anjuman* at Resht to behave with the utmost gentleness to their prisoner. To which the *anjuman* replied that until the Government withdrew their wicked emissaries who were darkening the days of the Prince his proper comfort could not be secured. The Zill could not have expected to get off scot-free, however, because he had made all his wealth out of Persia, and might reasonably be expected to contribute to her necessities in time of need. There was one little thing, besides, that made his position awkward, and could hardly have tended to his merciful treatment. Years before he had caused the treacherous murder of the then Ilkhani of the Bakhtiari, who was no less than the father of Sirdar Assad, now joint Dictator in Teheran. The Zill's excuse has always been that the deed was done by the orders of Nasr-ed-Din Shah. Finally the Zill was released on payment of £20,000, and the signing of bills for another £40,000, and it would seem as if he was lucky to get off so cheaply—the Bakhtiari chief might reasonably have demanded blood for blood, even although the assassination was a very old story.

The Legations at this time had an important part to play, none the less important because it was informal and unofficial. In their inexperience the Nationalists were continually venturing upon dangerous ground, and it was sometimes very hard to make them realise the risks they were running. In such matters Sir George Barclay proved himself their very good friend, and it is to their credit that they usually modified their attitude when they became aware of his opinions. Needless to say he was supported by M. Sabline in these unobtrusive efforts to



guide the Nationalists aright, though in certain matters he had to proceed independently of his colleague. The question of tail-twisting was one in which the influence of the Legations was useful. Few people had sympathy with individuals who had grown rich by sweating the country in the past, and if they were now being made to disgorge, the process seemed equitable enough—provided the spirit of the Government was changed. But it was procedure hardly consonant with civilised ideas, or with the freedom which it was the professed aim of the Nationalist party to obtain for the country. As a financial policy it was proving a failure, because inadequate to supply the needs of the situation, while in Liberal quarters in Europe it tended to diminish sympathy with the Nationalist cause. Another policy of the Government adopted upon its accession to power was the execution of notorious reactionaries. A batch of these were tried by an informal court, and found guilty of complicity in the murders at Shah Abdul Azim, described in chapter iv. Within five days five men were hanged or shot, one of them a high ecclesiastic, and another a plain mullah. Doubtless they deserved their fate; but the nature of the court which condemned them, and the vindictiveness displayed by some of its members, made it desirable in the interests of the new *régime* that the past should be forgotten. Through the instrumentality of the Legations an amnesty was somewhat tardily declared.

Where Sir George Barclay had to act alone, and found great difficulty, was in endeavouring to stem an anti-Russian campaign. The Nationalists wanted to change the dress of the Cossack Brigade, modelled on the Russian style, to take away the name which



suggested its connection with Russia, and to substitute other foreigners for its Russian officers. They also wanted to dismiss the little Shah's Russian tutor, and the Russian doctor to the Court. Some of these steps were proposed only by the rank-and-file, but others were backed by the sympathy, secret if not open, of the whole body of Nationalist opinion. It appeared to be quite forgotten that though Russia had always held, and still held, the northern part of Persia in the hollow of her hand, she had deliberately stood by while a Russophil Shah had been dethroned by a Russophobe Nationalist party. That constituted no proof, of course, that Russia had relinquished her ancient designs upon northern Persia—though the Anglo-Russian Agreement prominently intimated that she had done so—but it might very well have given pause to distrust, and suggested the expediency of conciliation rather than of unnecessarily arousing Russian antipathy. On account of the loudly expressed complaints in certain sections of the Russian Press, and statements to the same effect in the German papers, that Russia's honour and interests in Persia had been sacrificed on the altar of British friendship, public opinion in Russia was distinctly averse to any diminution in the appearances of Russian influence in Persia. In these circumstances any tampering with Russian privileges in Persia merely placed a weapon in the hands of the Russian reactionaries who were opposed to the policy of M. Isvolsky, and led to delay in the removal of those Russian troops whose presence was the immediate cause of the anti-Russian outbreak. It was possible for Sir George Barclay to demonstrate to the Nationalist leaders that interference with Russian institutions in Persia was fatal to their own desires, but to impress the same thing upon Nationalists

at large was next to impossible, and the local Press embarked upon a career of unbridled denunciation of things and people Russian. To save Persia from its Shah was a simple matter compared to saving Persians from themselves.

Voluntary contributions to the Treasury induced by moral and other suasion proving inadequate, the Government was compelled to seek some other method of obtaining funds. It had already been suggested to the Imperial Bank of Persia that an overdraft without security would be acceptable, and it provoked some surprise to discover that a British institution doing State business in Persia should be reluctant on these terms to finance the Government of the country in which it earned a large dividend. It was then proposed to pledge the Crown Jewels as security for an advance against the foreign loan that was to be arranged with the sanction of the Mejliss. But both the Russian and British Banks pointed out that if the Government had no power to raise a loan they had no right to pawn the jewels,—another surprise. Indeed, the Banks were not disposed to assist the Government at all, for the excellent reason that their just claims were being ignored, while there was even talk of repudiating some of their transactions with the previous Government. The simplest assurances in regard to outstanding questions would have satisfied the Banks, but these were not forthcoming from the Government, because, in fact, all sorts of irresponsible and uninformed people were meddling in affairs and making business impracticable. In this, as in so many other matters, the Nationalists were making mistakes through sheer ignorance and inexperience,—mistakes which would never have been made if they had called in European advice and acted upon it. Mean-



while disorder was becoming rampant throughout the country, and expeditions for the restoration of tranquillity were being held back for lack of money; or, as more often happened, disturbance was completely ignored out of simple inability to deal with it.

At the very moment when the Nationalist triumph was effected in Teheran bad news was pouring in from the provinces. Shiraz was reported in anarchy in consequence of the information that the great Seyd Abdul Hussein, supported by a large force of Kashghais, was marching upon it. We next heard that the Seyd had dropped out, and that Sowlat-i-Dowleh, Ilkhani of the Kashghais, was threatening the town with 10,000 men. Local feuds were imagined to be responsible for these movements, but there was reason to suppose that the Kashghais, a more numerous and more wealthy tribe than the Bakhtiaris, and equally warlike, were jealous of the deeds of their compeers in the north, and wanted to show what they could do. The prospect of fighting in the town led the British Legation to warn the Persian Government that if the advancing force was not stopped steps would be taken for the protection of the lives and property of foreigners. The situation eventually became so grave that the Consular guard was reinforced by forty men and a Maxim gun from Bushire. Fighting as a matter of fact never took place, although a large body of Kashghais arrived and camped outside Shiraz. Whether hostilities were prevented by British efforts, or by those of the Persian Government, or by divine influence working through the Ulema of Nedjef, has never become clear. The small British force, however, still remains.

Another trouble that caused a great commotion was that raised by the Shahsevens at Ardebil in the north-



east of Azerbaijan. Here these wild folk, supported by Rahim Khan, one of the protagonists at Tabriz, surrounded the town and besieged it, their numbers being several thousands, and their object reported as re-enthronement of Mohamed Ali. Tremendous efforts were made in Teheran to fit out an expedition, and some 2000 men were actually despatched from the capital, while a further force, stated to be of equal numbers, went from Tabriz. The Tabriz force melted away altogether, if indeed it ever existed, while a fraction of that from Teheran marched half-way, to Zinjan, and there halted to settle another rebellion. Meanwhile Ardebil was taken by the Shahsevens with considerable slaughter and much pillage. The situation had already led to preparations in the Caucasus, and heavy reinforcement of the Russian Consular guard, backed by the assembling of a considerable expedition on the border, resulted in the retirement of the Shahsevens. The Russians were in a great mind to cross into Persian territory and disarm the Shahsevens, who had been giving trouble on the frontier for years, but were persuaded not to interfere, so as to give the Persian Government a chance to earn some prestige by themselves dealing with the situation. Only a handful of the Persian troops, however, arrived at Ardebil, and it was two or three months after the affair was settled before a force under Ephraim appeared and went in search of Rahim Khan. So far as appeared, no steps were taken to punish the Shahsevens; but after a little fighting Rahim Khan was chased across the Russian border, whereupon Ephraim returned to Calcutta.

Simultaneously with the troubles at Shiraz, Zinjan, and Ardebil, there occurred widespread disorder in Kermanshah, Yezd, and Kerman. The local Press reported in addition cases of lawlessness in Kashan,

Shushter, Hamadan, Fars, and Kazvin, while our old friend Seyd Abdul Hussein was threatening an attack on Lingah, to which troops were sent as a precautionary measure. One paper declared that the situation was worse than under the previous Government, and I got myself into deep hot water in Teheran because in a telegram I quoted this observation and some others relating to instances of lawlessness. The Persian Legation in London, by order of the Government in Teheran, contradicted the statements which appeared in 'The Times,' with the rather unfortunate result that the contradiction was followed by an editorial note pointing out that the substance of the telegram was confirmed by Sir Edward Grey in the House of Commons in answer to a recent question on the state of Persia. The trouble was that the new Government, with unconquerable optimism, had early in the day notified the London Press through their Legation that every necessary step had already been taken to establish order throughout the country, and that all cause for future disturbance was removed.<sup>1</sup> The plain truth, therefore, was unpalatable, even although the Government could not really be held to blame for the disturbed condition of the country, which had been inherited from their predecessors. Their mistake was in trying to delude British public opinion into thinking they were able to deal with a situation that was, in fact, utterly beyond their control. The new Government did not lack the intention, or the desire, to allay disorder, but they lacked the essential means for quelling it—money. This little incident had the effect of cutting off from the Persian Press various opportunities of obtaining such news from the provinces as was not of a kind creditable to the administration.

<sup>1</sup> 'The Times,' 19th July 1909.



This feature of recent developments in Persia is worthy of something more than a passing notice. One of the early consequences of the establishment of Constitutional government was the birth of a free Press. Under the old *régime* the whole of Persia boasted no more than a single journal, which was, in fact, little else than a gazette to record the doings of the Court and the virtues of the monarch. The opening efforts on the part of Persian journalists were deeply appreciated, and there soon sprang up a crop of newspapers of the kind characteristic of Eastern countries that begin to seek the light. At the time of the *coup d'état* in June 1908, there were published daily and weekly some thirty newspapers in the capital, besides three at Tabriz, two each at Resht, Isfahan, and Bushire, and one at Shiraz, figures which give a fairly accurate measure of the political activity at the various important centres throughout the country. But with the bombardment of the Mejliss in June 1908 the Persian Press was completely blotted out. Even the Teheran official gazette was stopped, for everything that bore the slightest semblance to a newspaper was anathema to the triumphant Royalists.

Shortly after the appearance of the Revolutionaries at Resht in February 1909, an enterprising journalist started in that town a paper called 'Habl-ul-Matin' (strong rope). It had previously existed at Teheran in the Mejliss days, and was named after the 'Habl-ul-Matin' of Calcutta, a newspaper published in Persian—and edited by the brother of the Teheran editor—devoted chiefly to Persian news and to criticisms of the Indian Government. The Resht newspaper flourished there for some months, many copies being brought secretly to Teheran, where they constituted the only mental food enjoyed by local Nationalists



during the interregnum. When Mohamed Ali Shah was pushed by the Legations into re-establishing the Constitution, one newspaper made a sporting effort to appear, but suffered immediate suppression. With the advent of the Revolutionaries and the Bakh-tiaris, however, the Nationalists had it all their own way, and within a few days several sheets began to appear regularly. The 'Habl-ul-Matin' was transferred to Teheran, where it enjoyed but a brief spell of existence, its editor shortly afterwards being cast into prison for making impious references to the national religion. Another paper called 'Neda-y-Vatan' (cry of the fatherland) also ran for some time, until its editor was accused of political inconsistency, and incarcerated forthwith. In the autumn of 1909 there were running the 'Nejat' (salvation), 'Tamaddun' (civilisation), 'Tahzeeb' (morality), 'Mejliss' (parliament), 'Iran-i-Nau' (New Persia), and 'Sharq' (East). Of the politics of these newspapers it is difficult to speak with accuracy, but it may safely be said that in regard to home affairs they were all frankly critical of the Government. Of foreign affairs they frequently took a highly original view. The 'Mejliss,' for instance, believed Persia to be a "parade-ground for the political gallops" of Russia and England, and professed no faith in the efficacy of foreign correspondents for the transmission of Persian news to Europe—"May God open their eyes to the truth!" The 'Iran-i-Nau' had some sensible articles on finance, but flippantly referred to sound advice on this subject, that had appeared in a 'Times' leader, as "belching." This paper also published a letter advocating the establishment in Persia of military schools taught by Germans, and the appointment of German officers to instruct the Persian army. The 'Sharq,' in an article on the "cureless

diseases" of Persia, came down very heavily on the new Government, and deplored the fate of a country that had escaped from the hands of a single despot only to fall into the clutches of a number. It accused those in authority of weakness, tyranny, and self-interest, and more generally of sacrificing the public weal to their own personal ends. In another vein was an article in the 'Sharq' dealing with Russian domination, wherein it was stated that "Persians will make a mountain of their corpses as a barrier against aggression, so that posterity may know that torn and mutilated bodies are better than loss of independence and honour." In quaint contrast to this followed a solemn disquisition in the 'Mejliss' on the economic conditions prevailing in other countries and the importance of industrial activity. This article concluded as follows: "In our dear fatherland, thank God, out of the endeavours of our clever leading men we have a number of factories working, by the blessing of whose existence our country is prosperous and our people earning their living in comfort. As witness the factories of beggars, bankrupts, opium-smokers, fools, mischief-makers, charlatans, imitation constitutionalists, &c., &c.,—all of which, working at high pressure, keep their founders in affluence and cover their gracious names with historical honour!"

The Government, indeed, enjoyed no bed of roses, for on all hands they were assailed by criticism, some just, but a great deal utterly without justification. Perhaps not very much notice was taken of the imputations made against them, for it was recognised that a Cabinet of archangels would not be exempt from cavil in Persia. But it was curious that the denunciations came from within, while European observers, who as a whole were deeply sceptical of the ability of the



Nationalists to effect improvement, were content to withhold judgment and to make allowances. Depressing features of the situation were the abundant evidence of mutual distrust, and the indications that the Cabinet then acting provisionally lacked the backbone to stand up against popular but ignorant clamour. As there was every prospect that the same Government would continue in power after the meeting of Parliament, the future was not regarded as particularly promising.

The great day came on 14th November. Persia had gone through fire and water since the opening of the first Parliament more than three years before. Since then Muzaffar-ed-Din Shah had gone to his fathers, Mahomed Ali Shah had been dethroned, and the King of Kings was now a small, chubby-faced boy who had no voice in the affairs of State. Teheran had twice listened in alarm to the thunder of cannon fired in anger, and escaped but narrowly from the horrors of war within her walls. Where Persia had been an absolute monarchy she was now a constitutional country, with a nominal head who could not for years exert even the limited authority belonging to his station. The Regent who would act during the minority of the little Shah was the servant of the Constitution; in all the high places there sat not a single exponent of reaction. These are curious changes to have taken place in a country so backward as Persia, geographically so far removed from the influences of modern civilisation. Is it that the East is stirring to its very extremities, or is it that the changes are more in seeming than in reality? It can hardly be said that the spirit of progress has begun to animate all Persia, but that it has galvanised sections of this sleepy self-satisfied community into life is a fact there is no gainsaying.



Time alone can show to what extent the Persian leopard has changed his spots.

The opening of the new Mejliss marked the climax of the series of events that had recently attracted Western eyes to Persia. What the Nationalists strove for had been accomplished, and it was meet that the city should assume her gayest garb to celebrate the great occasion. The large and gaudy-coloured square where the artillery is housed was crossed and recrossed by festoons of flags that fluttered in the faces of passing riders. Huge carpets, soft, rich, dusky-red fabrics, some doubtless of priceless value, obscured the ugliness of blank walls. From the front of the Imperial Bank of Persia hung, side by side, suspended from monster poles, two enormous standards—the Union Jack and the Lion and the Sun. The streets were filled with as motley an array of soldiers as could well be conceived. The Persian regular on State occasions can be clothed to rival a bird of paradise, and the passing of the Shah from the Palace to Parliament was an opportunity not to be lost. Lanky Caucasians, still “walking arsenals,” save for the bombs that were now left at home, were conspicuous; crowds of shaggy tribal horsemen, trim Persian Cossacks, brilliantly blue white-corded gendarmes, lined the streets. The Persian himself is sad in the matter of clothes, but his peculiar complexion, not European and yet hardly Asiatic, his sparkling dark eyes, and his quaint headgear have an attraction all their own. Then there was the solemn bearded mullah, often more sanctimonious than holy; the green-turbaned *syed* who trades on his descent, authentic or reputed, from the Prophet; and the callow, long-necked theological student, who already assumes the attitude of infallibility belonging to his profession. And everywhere groups of hoodie-crows—

Persian women draped from head to foot in black shapeless cloaks that conceal face and figure. They chattered volubly among themselves in shrill unmusical tones, and except for an occasional peep of a dainty beaded slipper and the shy gaze of a cherub-faced child, one would have found it hard to believe, what the privileged know, that these forbidding garments often cover uncommon beauty and charm.

Entrance to the Mejliss was effected between richly decorated columns through a great gateway guarded by armed men. Huge crowds surrounded the approaches, but inside were only rows of soldiers, who continually presented arms to the greater ones privileged by ticket to enter. Aged mullahs hardly able to walk, gorgeous generals, most of them starred and ribboned for no prowess but aptitude in intrigue, merchants in brown *abbas*, humble in inverse ratio to their reputed wealth, diplomatists in uniforms, some of whom represented countries whose interests in Persia it would be difficult to discover, European ladies in hats and dresses from Paris, followed each other in quick succession. Inside the building the available space was allotted to princes, nobles, Ministers, officials, deputies, leading residents, the Diplomatic Corps and their ladies. The Throne, a simple chair, was set on a dais with a crimson silk canopy overhanging it. The Press had a small gallery all to itself, facing the Throne, and commanding the whole of the large tastefully decorated hall whence was to emanate thereafter the wisdom that shall restore to its former greatness a country far advanced on the path of degeneration.

There were no chairs but the one allotted to the Centre of the Universe. His small Majesty entered with dignity, carrying a huge jewelled scimitar and closely shepherded by the patriarchal Regent. The



*Persian Beauties in tights and short ballet skirts, the correct indoor costume for Persian ladies.*



TO THE  
ARMY

steps to the Throne seemed too high for the little legs, and the poor boy, encumbered with uniform and sword, laboured somewhat on the way up, despite the fatherly hand of the Regent on his shoulder. Sultan Ahmed pressed past his chair, regardless of the Regent, who wished him to sit down. But the boy knew his business better, and, before taking his seat, also uncomfortably high, stepped to the edge of the platform and gravely saluted the foreign Ministers one by one. These proceedings I was privileged to view with much difficulty from the Press gallery. The handful of editors and satellites that represent the newspapers of Teheran might easily have shared the available space with the few European correspondents, and seen all that was to be seen with ease. But, true to tradition, the distributors of tickets served their own ends, with the result that our gallery was packed with people who had no right to be there, and who almost completely shut us off from the interesting scene below. Fortunately a kindly eunuch of great height took compassion on me, and explained in a reedy but friendly voice the things I could not see or understand. He took an unholy joy in pointing out people whose tongues were constitutional but whose hearts were reactionary. He knew all the deceivers, and left me in no doubt as to his own sympathies. Who shall say that Persia is not on the move, when the very parasites of the old order find their nutriment distasteful!

The aged Regent having lost his voice, it devolved on the Minister for War, who is also Prime Minister, to read the Speech from the Throne. The Sipahdar, in uniform, left the side of his colleague, Sirdar Assad, the unassuming Bakhtiari chief who was clad in a simple brown *abba*, and climbed the same steps that

had embarrassed Sultan Ahmed. Despite his great position, it was evident that the Sipahdar felt himself in the august presence of the Shah-in-Shah, and it was with marked humility that he set his feet on the same level to take the paper containing the speech from the hand of the Regent. Having obtained it he salaamed and backed a few steps downward. Adjusting his spectacles with considerable deliberation, he cleared his throat and opened the paper; but alack! only to discover that something was amiss. The Regent in fact had given him the wrong paper, and the right one had to be searched for in the capacious folds of Azud-ul-Mulk's garments, from which paper after paper was drawn, till the breathless onlookers began to fear the right one had been left at home. At last, however, the valuable document was found and a catastrophe averted. The speech was short and unctuous, after the manner of similar utterances in other countries. At one point alone did the European listener prick up his ear in anticipation, but only to relax attention at once, for the allusion to the afflicting presence of foreign troops in the country was merely used as an opportunity for expressing confidence in the sincerity and integrity of purpose of the great neighbour in the north. A little respectful applause at the end of the reading and the ceremonies were complete, and Persia embarked anew on the deep waters of the future.



## CHAPTER XI.

## THE FINANCIAL POSITION.

THREE weeks after its opening the Mejliss unanimously approved the proposals of the Government—the members of which remained as before—with regard to borrowing abroad and the employment of Europeans in connection with the reorganisation of the finances and the army. The action of the Mejliss marked an important advance, and suggested that the new Parliament was possessed of a sensible desire to face the realities of the situation. A week later formal application was made to the British and Russian Legations for a loan of £500,000, but the application was not accompanied by any offer of security, nor was it suggested that any of the conditions, which it was well understood the Powers would attach to a loan, would be agreed to. In fact, it almost appeared as if the Persians expected to get the money against their simple acknowledgment, by cheque, *per* return. It was, however, only the Oriental method of offering infinitely less than you are prepared to give. All the little world in Teheran knew that the Powers wanted European executive officers in the Finance Department, as security that their money would be not only legitimately spent, but employed in a practical manner for the benefit of the country. And Russia

was expected to be inexorable concerning the appointment of Russian instructors to the force of *gendarmerie* to be organised in northern Persia. There were other requirements of secondary importance, but the real difficulty was one of principle in two respects. The Persians were willing to engage foreigners in advisory, but not in executive capacities; while they were prepared to employ military officers from the smaller European countries, but were adamant on the subject of Russians. Informal discussion of terms lasted for two months, whereafter British and Russian Notes were handed to the Persian Government in answer to the application. The terms embodied therein were, it is understood, acceptable to the Government, but were not expected to be approved by the Mejliss, and in fact the Cabinet threatened to resign shortly afterwards because the Mejliss would not support its policy in this and other respects. Early in April came a flutter in the European Press on the subject of German financial prospecting in Persia. It would appear that the Persians became aware how difficult the position of their country might become if they coquetted with an outside party, and they very wisely repudiated all desire to borrow from Germany, while Germans indignantly denied the ridiculous suggestion that there ever existed any idea of making a second Morocco of poor Persia. Finally, on 9th April, the Persian Government definitely refused the Anglo-Russian loan because there was attached to it conditions extraneous to the question of security and repayment. They were, in fact, refusing assistance because they thought they might get on without it. The Mint had been taken over by the Government, and from it a good profit was expected. There was vague talk of an internal loan, while a European expert was engaged in valuation of

the Crown Jewels, and it was reported that a large sum could be realised by their sale.

Meanwhile what was the condition of the country? Quiet reigned in the north of Persia, trade flourished, and taxation was coming in better than for a long time past. Why? Because Russia had plainly intimated by the despatch of forces to Tabriz, to Kazvin, to Ardebil, and by strong consular reinforcements to Meshed, Astrabad, Resht, and Urumiah, that she would not put up with disturbances that interfered with her trade and menaced either the interests or the lives of her numerous subjects settled in the north of Persia. Moreover, certain of the troops so despatched still remained as a warning to the wild tribesmen that their depredations would not be tolerated. By this state of affairs the Persian Government directly profited, not only in being able to collect taxation that otherwise could not have been obtained, but in having order kept for them instead of having to maintain it themselves at heavy expenditure. This view of the situation is of course entirely overlooked by Persians in general, though it cannot but be apparent to independent observers who are aware of the effervescent character of the tribes of northern Persia, and of their readiness to take advantage of the absence of authority. I do not think the best friends of the Nationalists can claim that, in the absence of funds sufficient for the organisation of a strong force, their Government is capable of keeping order in the wild regions of north-west Persia.

Turning to the south, what do we find? Indescribable chaos, government a farce, trade at a standstill almost wherever one looks. Following chapters dealing with my journey southward will make that abundantly clear. Here there are no Russian forces, no standing



deterrent from lawlessness, for it is well understood that British policy regards loss to British trade and traders in consequence of insecurity as preferable to active intervention. It is not the fault of the Persian Government that anarchy reigns, except in the negative sense that it is the Government's duty to quell disorder. Without the means the new Government are incapable of remedying the consequences of former misgovernment. If they had the means probably they could effect material improvement. The situation, therefore, resolves itself into this, that the Persian Government, having their house kept in order for them in the north by an outsider, and having no pressure put upon them to rectify matters in the south, can afford to dispense with assistance, regardless of the fact that they are neglecting their responsibility as the rulers of the country. The south of Persia is so far away from Teheran that turmoil may exist there without in the least disturbing the peace of the capital. Supreme in Teheran, and in the few Nationalist centres in the north, they care not if the devil take the rest! That is, in effect, the position taken up by the Government; for in declining the help of the Powers they consciously leave the south to take care of itself, because for the moment the situation does not press upon them.

In view of the probability, however, that British patience will not endure for ever, and that there is a limit to the commercial losses we are prepared to suffer before intervening, it is evident that the question of a loan must again come to the fore, particularly as the latest news from Persia (August 1910) indicates that a new Cabinet is prepared to reopen the question. In these circumstances it is interesting to examine Persian resources. Without accurate knowledge of the value of the Crown Jewels,

and considering the probability that public opinion may disapprove of parting with national property, much of it of historic value, I do not take this asset into account, though it may turn out that a loan upon this security can be arranged, or even their sale effected for a large sum. An internal loan is not likely to be a success, if the experience of the past counts for anything. Four years ago the attempt to establish a National Bank which would supply the Government with funds sufficient to obviate the necessity for foreign assistance ended in a fiasco. Many people subscribed, but few paid cash. A public grievance is the absence of accounts showing how the money collected was expended. Though the proposed capital amounted to several millions sterling, the actual sum subscribed was less than £50,000, of which the bulk was paid under pressure of various kinds. Anyhow, the whole of the money has disappeared, and there remain many people who demand the return of their subscriptions, and many others who want to see the accounts. Frankly, the truth is that the Persians do not trust each other, and their experience in regard to the National Bank merely suggests that their distrust is reasonable. This lack of mutual confidence is, of course, one of the great weaknesses of the situation. Were the Persians prepared to put their hands into their own pockets there would be much more hope for them.

The total debt of the country is in reality very small when considered in relation to the population and to the revenues which might easily be obtained by the introduction of a sound system of administration. As things are for the moment, however, the country is bankrupt, and there are very few sources of revenue that would constitute security for a loan from the



European financier's point of view. When, therefore, there arises any question of a joint British and Russian loan, the terms necessarily include certain reforms for the carrying out of which there is no surety without the employment of European executive officers. In other words, a preliminary to financial assistance is the institution of some degree of financial control.

Roughly, the foreign liabilities of the Persian Government are as follows :—

Creditor.	Amount.	Annual rate of Interest.
Russian Government .	£3,300,000	5 per cent.
British Government .	320,000	5 "
Russian Bank . .	1,160,000	6 to 18 "
British Bank . .	690,000	12 "
Total	<u>£5,470,000</u>	

To this sum must be added large claims by the British, Russian, and French Governments for losses sustained to property, goods supplied, &c., aggregating perhaps another £300,000.

For purposes of security the resources of Persia are practically confined to the Customs revenue. This, in recent years, has amounted to an average net total of £520,000, with a maximum of £600,000 in 1907-8. First charges on this source of income are the interest on and amortisation of the loans of the Russian and British Governments, amounting to £215,000. Next come the private advances by the Russian and British banks, at present only partially guaranteed by the revenues of the Customs, which though much less in aggregate than the Government loans, actually require a greater sum for their annual service owing to the higher rate of interest. The Russian Bank debt includes the late Shah's private



liabilities transferred to the Government at an annual charge of 6 per cent. The remainder consists of original advances at rates varying between 12 per cent and 18 per cent, and is largely composed of arrears of interest. Unpaid interest also bulks largely in the sum due to the British Bank. Given an average rate of 12 per cent, the annual interest payable on the total of £1,850,000 due to the banks amounts to £222,000. Finally, there are the annual expenses of the Cossack Brigade, £78,000; pay and pensions of European employees, £24,000; and sundry expenses (chiefly connected with the Customs administration), £40,000, all of which, though not actually secured upon, have become by usage chargeable to the Customs revenue. The ex-Shah's pension will, henceforth, also be met from the same source. The total charges are therefore as follows:—

Interest and amortisation on Russian and British loans . . . . .	£215,000
Interest on debts to Russian and British Banks . . . . .	222,000
Cossack Brigade upkeep . . . . .	78,000
European employees . . . . .	24,000
Sundry payments . . . . .	40,000
Ex-Shah's pension . . . . .	20,000
Total . . . . .	<u>£599,000</u>

This sum is considerably in excess of the net average Customs receipts. Given consolidation of the debts to the banks, and their conversion into a State loan bearing interest at 6 per cent, the saving thereby effected would do little more than balance the account. For all practical purposes, therefore, the Customs revenue is already completely mortgaged.

There remain various sources of income, of which

the principal is the *maliat*, or land revenue, reputed to produce in normal times £1,000,000 per annum. Profits from the Mint are worth about £50,000 a year, and telegraphs, passports, Caspian fisheries, and mines give perhaps another £100,000. But out of these sums have to be provided Civil List, upkeep of army, public works, pay of Government departments, an enormous number of pensions, and, in fact, all the oil that keeps the creaky machine of Persian administration from stopping altogether. How much of the *maliat* has reached Teheran during the last two years no man can say. One thing certain is that the normal amount is tremendously diminished, and that no considerable sum will be available until order is restored throughout the country, and until the provinces are impressed by the fact that Constitutional government in no way abolishes the obligation to pay taxes to the State. As security for a European loan the ordinary revenues of Persia may therefore be regarded as worthless in the present condition of the Administration.

But a totally different complexion would be put upon the situation were European efficiency imported into the conduct of affairs, as has been done in the case of the Customs Department through the agency of Belgian officials. Mint, posts, telegraphs, and passports together might easily be made to show a stable revenue, aggregating perhaps £200,000 per annum. The question of the *maliat* is a much bigger one, for a radical change of system, which would be bitterly opposed by a corrupt and ignorant bureaucracy, is essential before there can be any security that the money collected throughout the country shall reach the central Treasury. Moreover, it is commonly believed that an equitable land settle-



ment would result in the doubling of the revenue usually collected, the fact being that provincial authorities already impose taxes and imposts far in excess of the figures recognised by the Government. Bribery, too, is responsible for great areas of cultivated land escaping taxation altogether. There are, besides, various other minor taxes and revenues which with attention might easily be expanded into valuable assets.

Summarised, the Persian financial position is as follows: Foreign indebtedness £6,000,000, *plus* internal loans and arrears generally supposed not to exceed £1,000,000. On the other side of the account stand Customs revenue, *maliat* and sundry sources of income worth a total of £1,750,000, and supposed to be capable of expansion to £3,000,000. State expenditure for the future is greatly reduced by the presence of a minor on the Throne, and there should be a substantial reduction in military charges when a small but efficient *gendarmerie* is substituted for the present large, but worthless, regular army. There is practically no expenditure on public works, while the inordinate list of pensions which encumber the Budget can be materially reduced. Altogether, Persia may very well be regarded as less burdened financially than any other big country in the world. Granted an advance sufficient for the conversion of the loans bearing high interest, present alienable income is sufficient to meet all foreign obligations. A comparatively small sum would then suffice for the reorganisation of the Administration, while the improvement effected would result in the provision of ample funds to meet the interest thereon.

As things are, however, the Persians are opposed to incurring further foreign indebtedness, not because



they are averse to handling foreign money, but because they are too jealous of foreign interference to accept the financial supervision which the Powers have hitherto regarded as an indispensable corollary to the granting of a loan. The question of advancing money to the Persian Government without any conditions at all has frequently been discussed, and it would certainly seem that the British Government, to be consistent in its professed faith in the Nationalist capacity to remedy the evils from which the country has long suffered, might well entertain such a plan. The Russians, however, have always been averse to this course, while individual British views have been that the Persians would surely hang themselves with the money, and demonstrate so unmistakably to the world their administrative incapacity that the intervention which both Powers wish to avoid would become inevitable. It has been felt that careful nursing alone can make a Constitutional Government effective, and that the independence of action conferred by an unrestricted loan would lead to disaster. An interesting view in this connection has been brought to my notice by a person with an unrivalled knowledge of Persian affairs and character. I asked him why no loan had been arranged against the Crown Jewels, and he replied that civil war would be the consequence of any Government in Persia obtaining unrestrained possession of a considerable sum of money, either by the pledging of the Jewels or in the shape of a foreign loan. He added that all sensible Persians regarded it as the saving of the situation that the Nationalists had hitherto been short of funds, and that the policy of the Powers in requiring control of money lent was entirely approved. This instructive commentary on the position suggests

one important reason for the unaccountable delay in arranging a loan when money, admittedly, is urgently required. There are at present in Teheran the agents of no less than three distinct groups desirous of lending money on a large scale to the Persian Government. None, so far, have been successful, and it may be that the conditions imposed, or the security demanded, are not the only difficulties in the way, but that the deep-seated mistrust of all Nationalists for each other results in the impotence of the few in power to overcome the veiled opposition of the remainder.

*Note.*—The various advances of the Imperial Bank of Persia to the Persian Government have recently been consolidated into a single loan, bearing interest at the reduced rate of 7 per cent, and secured upon the Customs Revenue of the ports in the Persian Gulf, an arrangement by which Persia makes an annual saving of £35,000.

## CHAPTER XII.

## TEHERAN AND ITS INHABITANTS.

To the European eye Teheran is disappointing. One expects much from the principal city of the Centre of the Universe, and one finds little. The bazaars are poor compared with those of Cairo or Constantinople, while the palaces are a melancholy mixture of what is delightfully Persian and abominably European. The colour of the town is drab, for its walls are of simple mud, while most of its houses are built of the same uninviting substance, sun-baked into bricks. The better dwellings are of burnt brick—cooked, according to a Persian friend of mine—and are not infrequently stuccoed over to resemble a sculpture gallery, and painted white, or pale green, or red pink, or a blue so blue as to keep a whole street shuddering. The chief glory of a nobleman's house is a great room in which the ceiling is hidden by massive chandeliers composed of millions of flashing prisms. Its owner loves to have placed, wherever there is standing room, gorgeous clocks, shining gilt ornaments, flamboyant vases, and anything that adds to the confusion of glaring colours. Above all, he comes to grief in the matter of upholstery. Where in the world he finds such gaudy combinations of brocade and velvet is beyond one's power to guess;



but as Europe is responsible one can only say that these productions are a disgrace to civilisation. Then, perhaps, in the midst of so much dazzling unsightliness, there may be found underfoot, lying modestly in a corner, some gem of Oriental art, a dark-red or maroon rug with velvety surface whose warm harmonious colours suggest all the mystery and enchantment of the East. In the simpler houses there will be found in each room, besides a lesser attempt to caricature the rainbow, a delightful arrangement of square or arched niches (*tochche*, in Persian), rows of doors that are planned to look out upon the flowers and trees of a Persian garden, possibly a copy of the Koran within whose beautifully decorated boards are discovered the exquisite writing and delightful illuminations that in every page indicate infinite and loving care on the part of some bygone artist. Here, indeed, as elsewhere in the East, one is confronted with painful evidence that the Oriental sense of art completely ceases to operate when in contact with the things of the West.

Here and there stands a mosque surmounted by an egg-shaped dome flanked by the inevitable minarets. The dome is sometimes faced with tiles of brilliant turquoise-blue, sometimes with an exquisite mosaic of all the colours under the sun; while in the holy places it is covered with a casing of beaten gold that gathers up the sunlight and from a distance gives the dome the appearance of a glittering star. Unfortunately there is no variation from the form of the gateway, or dome, or minarets, and the eye tires of seeing the typical mosque throughout the length and breadth of Persia, frequently though one is charmed anew by the wealth of detail and the richness of colouring which contrast it with the never-ending mud of adjacent buildings. The streets of Teheran are generally as unpicturesque as they

could be, either a bad imitation of Europe or a dirty unkempt example of Oriental slovenliness. Still there are exceptions, for occasionally one finds a broad road flanked by tall trees, approached perhaps by a massive gateway that affords a vista of green, under the shade of which idlers drink their tea and puff their *kalian*s.

A feature of the streets is the women who wash clothes. This homely operation may be performed in private, but it seems to be the pleasure of the Persian housewife to wash her dirty linen in public. Many streets boast a little canal of running water, either bubbling along in the open at the feet of a row of trees, or coursing secretly underground in a channel that has occasional openings to the daylight. At every one of such is to be found a crouching woman, busy with the double task of rinsing swabs of cloth and keeping her face hidden from the gaze of passers-by. Where the water is open there will be half a dozen shapeless squatting figures of which one can see but the bare brown arms punching and twisting and waving. And so the water flows onwards, laden with soap and dirt, to be used by many others below—to clean pots, to cool the legs of horses, to wash the sores of beggars, to be lapped by pariah dogs, to be drunk of with satisfaction by thirsty humankind. Oh! for the frame of mind that questions not the gifts of Heaven.

In the north of the town these runnels are pure and bright; and the water tumbles quietly over clean gravel, or lies in limpid pools that magnify every pebble at the bottom. And wherever the water runs there are trees giving grateful shade. It is here that the Persian is tempted to rest from the glaring sun. Down he squats on his heels and begins to gaze with far-off eyes into the rippling current. At such



*A Persian Anderun, or Harem.*



*Persian Women washing.*



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moments he seems without thought or consciousness; his mind, unloosed, wanders in the infinite, searching out the Giver of all things that it may bow down in gratitude. Never a dog in the sun, nor a cat in the warmth of a blazing fire, knows greater content than our simple subject of the Shah when he sucks in at every pore the comfort of a shadow and the soul-pleasing melody of running water.

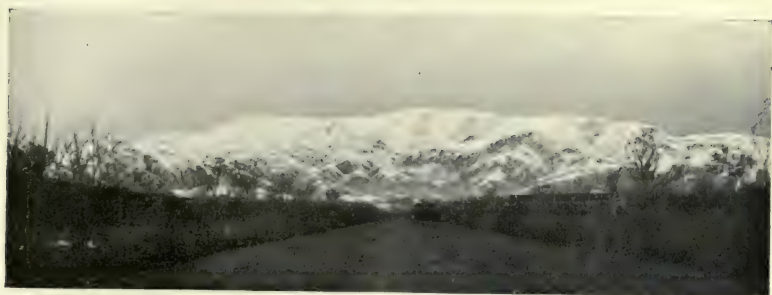
The Gun Square is one of the principal centres of life in the city. Along two sides of it are housed the Shah's artillery, in gaudy buildings, thickly ornamented by the golden sign of the Lion and Sun. At the western end is a platform covered with ancient guns, one a curious old weapon with a metal barrel twelve inches in diameter and pierced with seven bores. The architect of this wondrous engine of war must have thought to economise material when he resorted to the ancient recipe for the construction of cannon—to take a hollow and put iron round it; for he has endeavoured to make one lot of iron do for several hollows, with what success in practice none can tell. In the centre of the Square is a garden, at the corners of which stand ponderous old cannon that have long ago broken their carriages, and now drunkenly point their muzzles to the skies or rub them in the ground. The eastern side of the Square is filled by the Bank, that place of tremulous memory for me. In front of it is a spacious puddle known as the Lake of the Bank-in-Shahi. In winter the lake is a considerable pool, in summer a depression. The Bank has offered to fill up the depression at its own expense, but the Government declines the proposal on the ground that it might give the Bank occasion for territorial acquisition. The Government itself will not do the filling up, partly because of the expense, and partly because of the philosophic conviction

that it is good for people rich enough to have business at a bank to encounter some risk in getting there.

And writing of the Gun Square brings me to Teheran's chief glory—the magnificent range of mountains that look down upon the city from the north. A photograph shows them but poorly, but sufficiently perhaps to indicate the grandeur of the picture they present, towering in massive white-topped beauty over the colourless plain at their feet. They stretch as far to the east and to the west as the eye can reach, great shimmering piles of snow resting on a base of purple foothills. The highest point measures over 12,000 feet above the sea, and is distant about twenty miles from the city, though in the translucent atmosphere of Persia it looks so near that a hard-thrown stone might almost pitch on the very top. Fifty miles to the east rises to 19,000 feet the perfect cone of Demavend, Persia's highest mountain, and without rival in the world for grace or beauty. All this loveliness is a perpetual gift from Heaven to the dweller in Teheran; yet in all the town there is scarce a house so built that its windows look forth on this perfect picture of Nature's providing. One were almost tempted to think of the pearls that are cast before swine, were it not that the Persian really loves his mountains, and would gladly look at them from his own housetop if the opportunity to gaze could be obtained without the risk of seeing into his neighbour's harem. "Eyes in the boat" is one of the few public obligations recognised by the Persian, and his devotion to it costs him dear to the end of his days.

A Persian garden is always a thing of joy, more perhaps by force of contrast with the brazen barrenness outside than because of its intrinsic beauty. There is always water—the great lack in Persia—





*The Elburz Mountains from the City Walls.*



*A Persian Garden.*



*The Mountains seen from the Gun Square.*



running in canals, lying still in great ponds, or bubbling from fountains into blue-tiled tanks. Summer-houses overlook the water, and masses of trees cast their shadows over all. Between the trees the undergrowth is allowed to run wild, while the open places are barred with banks of flowers. Here the Persian spreads his carpet and sits down to tea, and late in the evening to the wine of Shiraz, which he drinks for its effect on his senses, and not as a pleasant liquid to quench his thirst. "I no drinkee for drinkee," says John Chinaman; "I drinkee for drunkee"—thereby stating the case for all Asia.

The Persian is, above all, a merry fellow, charming to meet, and delightful as a host. He loves the good things of this world, and is as extravagant in his tastes as an American heiress. His devotion to Islam does not prevent indulgence in the minor vices, and he adores every kind of humour that is not directed against himself. Wit also is his in no small degree, and it would indeed be difficult to imagine a being more different from the grave and solemn individual that one is wont to associate with the Orient. Nevertheless he is Oriental to the backbone when one comes to do business with him, and a straightforward answer or a plain statement is to him as difficult of achievement as the truth to a born liar. His subtilty of mind gives him a consciousness of superiority over the matter-of-fact European; he can see much further round a subject than the simple foreigner, gives himself great airs in consequence, and then tumbles headlong over a practical matter. His perception of the inessential is stupendous, his grasp of the essential pathetic. A typical Persian stood by his master the Shah during a great review of troops in France. One hundred thousand soldiers in solid phalanxes



were paraded before them, the flower of the French army, horse, foot, and artillery. "Give me a thousand of my cavalry," said Amir Bahadur Jang to the Shah, "and I will ride through them from end to end." The truth is that a single squadron of French cavalry could ride through the whole of the Persian army, as anybody who has seen both armies knows. Yet the gallant Persian who had attained the position of Commander-in-Chief of the Shah's army, without ever seeing a fight, or knowing the rudiments of warfare, in the warmth of the moment probably believed what he said, while perhaps the Shah believed it too out of pure enthusiasm. It must be admitted, however, that if Bahadur Jang had been vouchsafed the opportunity to pit his thousand Persians against the French legions he would have perceived their inadequacy; his common-sense would have prevailed over his valour. The Persian, in fact, is too much given to floating in the air. When brought to earth by realities he is practical and clever enough. The trouble is to bring him to earth.

There are more politics to the square yard in Teheran than anywhere else in the whole world. It is a new fashion with the Persian, and he takes to it with joy. It is no inconsiderable fraction of the battle that so goodly a proportion of the inhabitants are capable of entertaining an interest in things that do not primarily concern them. It seems proof that nationalism of a kind, at least, is implanted in the Persian breast. If representative government were all the ignorant Oriental paints it, one might believe there was hope that in the comparatively near future the political retrogression from which this country has been suffering for many long years would cease, and give place to the promise of better things for the

future. Unfortunately for Persia, the Persians do not grasp the fact that it is the character of European peoples, and not their institutions, that has been their salvation. Out of the character of our people has grown the British Constitution that we know, and other foreign nations in varying degrees have adopted our system of government, not because they have realised its superiority and copied it, but because the development of their national characteristics has followed the same lines as our own and forced upon them what has been forced upon us. Environment in the West has developed individualism, which in its turn has demanded political recognition.

The consequence has been the gradual importation into our system of government of representative institutions which give scope to the mental activity of the individual. In Persia, however, environment has been, and remains for the present, inimical to the growth of individualism. In other words, the frame of mind, the national characteristics in fact, of the Persian do not seem to constitute soil suitable for the development of representative institutions. Parliamentary government may be established, may even do its work in Persia, but until there is some remarkable modification in the character and temperament of the Persian, it is very much to be doubted whether it will ever be seen at its best, or do for Persia what it appears to have done for certain of the countries of Europe. It is a truism that reform must come from within. There is a demand for reform in Persia, but is the demand to be satisfied by the adoption of a particular system, successful elsewhere because congenial to the character of the people who invented it? One would have more faith in Persian aspirations if the Persian had evolved a method of his own more



in consonance with the disposition of his fellow-countrymen. Icy-cold water may be good for a Polar bear, but it kills the Bengal tiger. For Persia to copy western institutions and think to regain thereby her lost position seems over-sanguine. The Persian will tell you how Japan adopted western institutions and forthwith was able to hunt the Russians out of her preserves. But Japanese achievements are no more due to her foreign importations than to the man in the moon. It is Japanese character, the growth of centuries, that enabled Japan to face the problem of reorganisation, to conquer it, and to emerge equipped with the weapons of the West, but armed in reality with the capacity for self-abnegation, the sense of discipline, the devotion to ideals that have belonged to her people for ages. Were the Persian to acquire characteristics similar to those of the Japanese, all things would be possible for him. While he remains Persian most things will be difficult for him, if what the Persians say about one another is true.

It is one of the most instructive features of the existing situation, that with their hearts presumably full of desire to sweep away abuses, to abolish tyranny, to establish decent government, there are few Persians who trust their neighbour. Each seems to possess the conviction with regard to his fellow-reformer that the grinding of an axe is always in view, and that he would readily lapse into the methods of reaction if not carefully watched. Such is the opinion which many Persians will freely express to the European with whom they are intimate. To the foreigner it seems an overwhelming evidence of weakness; but the Persian himself, again, frankly declares that what is required is a system by which corruptibility shall be rendered nearly impossible, the creation of a public



opinion which shall act as an incentive to public rectitude. Wherein seems very good sense, particularly when one reflects that a good deal of our own comparative immunity from public dishonesty is due to the certainty of detection, and the total loss of worldly position, in case of deviation from the paths of righteousness. Hitherto public office in Persia has merely been a mine of wealth to the unscrupulous, who incurred no odium by acquiring riches at the expense of the community. It will be difficult for the Persian to rid himself of the instinct that place and power are only divine opportunities for the acquisition of plunder. Banded together, those in power will be hard to defeat by those out of power, who are themselves hungry for the loaves and fishes of office. But the European parliamentary system seems to the Persian the one remedy against the danger of individuals acquiring the upper hand to the exclusion of other individuals. There will be opportunity for attack, for defeat, for readjustment of the administrative machine—a chance, in fact, for all, where hitherto there has been room only for the favoured few. Whether Persia will fare better in the hands of the many than in those of a single sensible autocrat, who from self-interest keeps a sharp look-out upon the condition of his property, remains to be seen.

The spirit of altruism and self-sacrifice that is so bound up with the progress of a western State is lacking as yet in Persia. Until the Persian loves his neighbour as himself his profit in democratic institutions must be small. A decent system of government will undeniably do something towards saving the country from the engulfment which has long threatened it from north and south; yet one finds but few indications of the contrite hearts and humble spirits

that must precede national regeneration. That, however, is a big word to connect with the present state of transition in which Persia finds herself. The aim of her patriots is, for the moment, no more than to evolve order out of chaos, to avoid such a situation as will entail upon England and Russia the necessity of assuming jointly, or separately, in their respective spheres, the administration of the country.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## TEHERAN TO ISFAHAN.

THE climax of the situation which brought me to Persia having passed, there remained no occasion for my continued presence in Teheran; and it was with thankfulness mingled with regret that I handed the Nationalists over to the tender mercies of a young colleague, in the hope that his less sophisticated eyes might perceive in their doings more promise for the future.

There were various ways out of Persia, but few available to the traveller. There was the Caspian route, much worn, and already traversed by the writer three years ago. The same applied to the Askabad-Meshed road, only I had entered Persia that way, whereas now I proposed—*In sh'Allah*—to leave it. There remained three well-known exits, *viâ* Kermanshah to Baghdad, through Shiraz to Bushire, and by Isfahan and Bakhtiari-land to Ahwaz and the Gulf. To make a choice in these days was hard. The Kurdish tribes between Hamadan and Kermanshah were at war with each other: sixteen brigands were known to be murdering and plundering on the road, and all caravaning was at a standstill. It was surely folly to tempt the Kurds. As for the Shiraz road, it was



bestrode north and south by bands of ferocious rascals whose delight was to strip the traveller to the buff, and to send him tobogganing down the side of snow-covered mountains on a lump of ice. One lot had just attacked a Russian Consular party bound for Bushire, killed one Cossack, wounded two more, killed five of their horses, besides slaughtering about twenty in-offensive Persians. That was no route for a Christian. As for the Bakhtiari road, inquiries by telegraph from Isfahan and Ahwaz resulted in the discouraging replies, "too late in the season," and "journey not recommended; heavy snow reported." Robbery and murder on the one hand, and the prospect of transmutation into an icicle on the other! It was a Spartan choice, and when the moment to decide came I was nearer "cold feet" than at any other time throughout a long and fearful life. But covenanting blood prevailed, and I turned my back on the easy way homeward, by carriage, steamer, and train. Choosing the risk of being frozen, I packed my kit, said good-bye to the good and never-to-be-forgotten friends I had made in Teheran, and departed from the city in the early morning.

Or rather I planned to depart in the early morning, and only say that I did that my spirit may not be vexed by the memory of what happened. The importance of really getting through portions of the Bakhtiari country before the passes were finally closed for the winter had forced upon me the necessity of driving the 300 miles to Isfahan, instead of caravanning as I should have preferred, for by so doing a precious week could be saved. Hence it was my ill-luck to have to depend upon a carriage for the opening stage of my journey. I had booked a large and comfortable-looking landau to be at my door at eight in the morning. This

vehicle was in the hands of the coach-repairer when I inspected it, and he assured me that though many of the essential parts were tied together by rope this form of joining was really more appropriate to Persian roads than the glueing, soldering, and welding favoured by Europeans. He promised me a safe journey, and took up the respectful, prognostic-of-good attitude one associates with the expectation of an *in'am*. (Persian, present; Anglicè, tip.) I ignored the attitude, but interjected *In sh'Allah* to his prophecy. I hinted that if the carriage conveyed me safely to Isfahan I might transmit an *in'am*, as this happy ending would be entirely due to his effective tying of the ropes. It was his turn to say *In sh'Allah*, and he said it with unction, but, I thought, with some hopelessness. For which I had little wonder, as in Persia a carriage wouldn't be a carriage at all but for its accidents; without them it would be a miracle.

Next morning at eight the road outside my gate was a blank, and continued so until ten, when I despatched a minion in haste to summon the missing vehicle. The road now looked busier, and became more busy when somebody else's servant, seeing mine passing, came out to say *salaam aleikum*, and about ten thousand other things, for the saying of and listening to which they both sank to their heels,—in other countries they sit down with a click, but in Persia they do it with the stateliness of a camel. This stirring sight I witnessed from a distance. Then I sent a second hireling to bid the first remember the fate of Lot's wife. And so the twain in the road became three, and the prospect was more busy than ever. But it was evident that my message had struck home, for number one showed signs of animation and gradually rose to his feet,—elsewhere they come up with a jerk, but in Persia they



arise with the graceful deliberation of centenarians. And so the carriage came, three hours after the appointed time.

Now this carriage for which, with relays of horses to Isfahan, I had paid over £20, was supposed to carry four passengers, each with 40 lb. of baggage, excess thereafter costing about 5s. per 10 lb. As I had only my servant with me, I argued, mentally, that we could take 160 lb. of luggage, plus the equivalent in weight of two people, without extra charge—a total of over 400 lb. As we had less than 300 lb. I never doubted that there would be any question of additional payment. But I reckoned without the clerk who accompanied the carriage. He said that as two passengers were to use the carriage the free baggage was only 80 lb., and that on everything beyond we must pay. At this rate I would have to disburse another £5, and that I had no intention of doing. I pointed out that the carriage ticket permitted me to take four people and 160 lb. of baggage, and that I was bringing far less; why then should I pay? Obviously an *in'am* was required, and I instructed my domestic to produce a toman (4s.) But the maker of difficulty pointed out the discrepancy between the one toman offered and the twenty-five I would have to pay at the office. He intimated that ten tomans for himself might square the business. I retorted that all his defunct relations were burning, and ordered the coachman to proceed. The coachman, however, was torn between the desire to earn my favour and the fear of incurring his master's displeasure. He moved on at a very slow trot down the street which led both to the carriage office and to the Isfahan gate. Following us came the clerk yelling instructions to the driver to stop at the office or accept instant dismissal. My servant on the



box kept prompting the driver to take no notice, pointing out that a fat bakshish from me was far more important than the ravings of the underling behind. At this moment we met a European friend, and I stopped the carriage to say another farewell. He happened to be chief of the Post Office, and the giver of the southern postal contract to the owner of the carriages. The troublesome man behind salaamed with deep respect, there were a few sharp words of disapproval, a visiting-card was handed over with the dictum, "any complaints to be referred to ME," and my troubles were at an end. We sailed away at the rate of five miles an hour, only half a day late. But that is a flea-bite in a country already nearly a thousand years behind time.

The golden dome of the mosque at Shah Abdul Azim passed, and we were really clear of the city. It lay behind us, a mere smudge on the great plain stretching southward from the feet of the snowy Elburz. The mountains were exquisite to look at in the afternoon sun, Demavend a thing perfectly poised on its purple plateau. It was all very beautiful, but very cold. There was for me more human interest in the dark mark below, that was all that could be seen of the Shah's capital. The hardest wanderer cannot spend a year in one place without sending forth roots that drag heavily when wrenched from the soil that has nourished them. The prospect of the well-beloved road, long deserted, was unholily joyful; yet overcast by the thought of the friendly souls, the goodly occasions, the many pleasant realities of the days just gone, that henceforth were to be but floating dreams. The changing scenes of incessant travel are quickly forgotten, or remembered at most with a comfortable thought unspoiled by sentiment. But for me hereafter Teheran is a special

memory, not to be conjured without the sighing of a sigh, and perhaps the shedding of a tear.

The road we travelled was the subject of a concession to a foreign company, whose interests are managed by the well-known firm of Lynch Brothers. Their Teheran agent had done me the politeness of giving me a letter authorising use of the company's rest-houses, and of otherwise facilitating my journey. His recommendations proved very useful at the post-stations, and were ill-requited by the mendacity of my menial, who declared me a high official in the road company, and greatly superior in rank to the Teheran agent. Later on he announced me as a Consul, the highest dignity attainable to a foreigner in Persia, and generally bruited my importance to idlers at large. I got perhaps a trifle more respect in consequence, but suffered the drawback of having to pay at a higher rate for all forms of service. The man who called the boy who deviled for the driver of each relay of horses expected something, as well as the boy, his relations, and the beggars who lived on the family crumbs. The driver, of course, received a regular *in'am*, minimum a shilling, maximum indefinite—the capacity to accept presents has no limit among coachmen all the world over. Every fifteen miles or so we changed horses. It was usually a weary business, for the whole hierarchy of individuals connected with each relay had to be waked one by one. Then the horses had to be aroused from dreams of idleness, fed, watered, harnessed, brought forth, stuck on, cursed, and finally whipped before we got under way. An hour is quick time, twelve hours is quite ordinary, for sometimes there are no horses, and sometimes dynamite would not make them stir, utterly exhausted as they often are from overwork. At the end of stage two, one



poor brute which had been flogged all the way, and had been pushed along by the swinglebar throughout most of the distance, actually fell down dead when released from the carriage. How long he had been dead I cannot say, but I think he was alive when originally harnessed. Levity seems wicked in connection with cruelty to animals, but, in Persia, if one took such things seriously, one would be for ever steeped in anguish. One cannot help the situation without changing the disposition of all Asia. If there is a Providence above, He must have meant it so, hard though it be to understand.

Our first important town was Kum, famous as a place of political protestation. Its celebrated mosque is sanctuary from the wrath even of the Shah, and you may steal your neighbour's chickens or wives, or cut his throat, and yet be safe from pursuit in Kum. *Bast* is a peculiarly Persian institution, and supplies a regular public want. It is a pity some of our wealthy philanthropists at home do not establish free gold and silver mines here, so that the spot might be more complete as a paradise for evil-doers. Into the mosque no European is allowed; iron chains bar all the approaches, besides local prejudices, which are reported capable of attaining the last stages of frenzy at the thought of a *giaour* intruding where only the faithful may enter. It is curious that the Persians, notoriously the most irreligious people in Asia, should be so fanatical on this point. Educated Persians, of course, smile at the idea, but declare the popular feeling strong. Only quite a few years ago residence in Kum was highly uncomfortable for a European, and the one telegraph clerk resident there used to have a very close time. Even now children shout derisively after the foreigner, though the inhabitants



generally content themselves with looking upon him with contempt. An interesting symptom of the times is that Sirdar Assad offered, when at Kum, to take the British telegraph clerk into the mosque, with the object of breaking down the unreasoning prejudice on the subject. The Bakhtiariis, however, are particularly casual in the matter of their beliefs; they were, moreover, at that moment a marching army, so that while their chief might do what he pleased the foreign resident had to remain there alone afterwards, and very wisely declined the compliment. So the tomb of the Imam is still without its Cook or its Peary.

At Kum we heard that the previous day's post-waggon had been stopped by brigands and robbed of all the money. The culprits were known to be Shah-sevens, a branch of the gentry who had recently invaded the city of Ardebil in the north, and been responsible for the bringing of a large Russian expedition into the country. No steps were being taken to punish the thieves, because there were no troops in the town. Besides, to search for them in the maze of mountains to the south would be hopeless. It was clearly the will of God that the post had been robbed. Public opinion had not crystallised in regard to the prospects of subsequent travellers at the hands of the brigands. The road was probably safe now, but who could tell? Perhaps they would not touch a Feringhi in any case. On the other hand, English travellers were safe prey, as the British Government only wept when they were attacked and robbed. It did little, which showed what a good and kind Government it was in comparison with the Russian. Wherefore I could have wished myself a subject of the Tsar while passing the dangerous neighbourhood. As we drove down the road upon which yesterday's outrage had

taken place, we were shown the ruined building behind which the wicked robbers had taken the post-waggon, that they might ransack it at their convenience. My servant was anxious about the readiness of my revolver, the driver kept a close watch on the horizon, only I was brave and fearless, strong in the faith that a Persian robber would never have the stomach to do the same deed on successive days. And I was right, for we toiled through the tragic region, and found but a Sabbath-like calm in its lonely wastes.

Sixty miles south of Kum stands the city of Kashan, famous for a variety of things, but principally for the timidity of its inhabitants and for the nobility of character of its scorpions. The latter are black, more numerous than the grains of sand upon the sea-shore, and have stings like daggers. They maintain a perpetual feud with the dwellers of the town, but are courteous enough never to interfere with strangers. As for the people, they are said to have been affected in courage by the peculiarity of the climate, which seems highly inimical to the development of bravery. Stories of the pusillanimity of the Kashani are found in many books on Persia, particularly the one regarding the request of the Kashan regiment, on its return from the capital after a campaign, to be allowed an escort homeward. One has also heard of the soldier from Kashan who declined to join in a battle on the ground that his feelings would not stand the sight of men killing each other. Proof that climate is responsible for this characteristic of the people of Kashan is furnished by the case of the commander of the Shah's troops, that in the spring marched south to turn the Bakhtiari out of Isfahan. I had the honour of an interview with this officer before he started, and found him brimming over with military ardour. He would



smite the enemy hip and thigh within a week or two, and bring the head of Samsam-es-Sultaneh to Teheran. This frame of mind lasted him to Kum and beyond, but it changed completely once he had camped at Kashan. There he halted for two months, ignoring all orders to proceed, and praying daily to Heaven for an excuse to retreat. In one respect, however, he showed great self-restraint; for he allowed his army literally to devour everything in the shape of supplies to be found in the town, without ever paying a farthing—a striking instance of the ability of the somewhat extravagant Persian to practise economy in seasons of stress.

Rolling over the plain south of Kashan we got our last glimpse of Demavend. Distant just 160 miles, this beautiful mountain stood out as clearly in the morning sunlight as if no more than twenty miles away. The great range of which it is the outstanding feature barely showed an edge of snow above the horizon; but Demavend itself, shorn by distance of its dark foothills, swam serenely in the steely blue of the distance, transparently white, elegant in form almost as the spire of a cathedral. Refined by the immense stretch of atmosphere through which we saw it, it no longer gave the impression of bulk or height, but only of something supremely delicate in shape and colour; no more material, but a thing of spirit touching sky, afloat from earth. Each day in all these long months it had been mine at will to sweep an eye over that perfect picture overlooking the Shah's capital; and now, when a low ugly ridge shut off the view to the north, and I knew I should see Demavend no more, there fell upon me a chilling sense of loss.

Three stages south of Kashan I went through a series of emotional moments that stirred me to the



depths. We changed horses at a place called Khaledabad, and leaving the plain behind plunged into a region of mountains. The road wound in and out of hills that were spurs only of great masses behind, surmounted by peaks that on either hand towered up to a height of over 11,000 feet. Darkness had fallen before we left the plain, and only the stars and the remnant of a brilliant moon served to show the way. I sat on the box beside the driver, that I might enjoy the beauty of the night and let my servant get a comfortable sleep in my place in the carriage. I had commenced the stage by walking a couple of miles to get warm, so that before I mounted we were well on the road, and Agajan far travelled into the land of Nod. No sooner seated than I realised that the muffled figure beside me was not as other men. He moaned at the horses, alternately hurried them and allowed them to drop into a walk, leant forward so that I feared he must descend in a heap, sat up with jerks, breathed like a man fighting with death. My diagnosis was an unconquerable tendency towards somnolence, aggravated by strong drink. Later, however, I understood that my friend was but half-waked from an opium sleep, that precious refuge of the Persian stage-driver. Evidently the fumes hung heavily over his brain, and were it not that my elbow busied itself with his ribs, the horses would assuredly have ceased from their task altogether. But as long as they kept moving I was happy, for the night was magnificent, lit by the crescent of moon and the scintillating brilliance of the stars. All around were the nebulous lines of snow-clad mountains reaching towards the heavens; close by the blackest shadows made deep caverns in the dim light. The horses did the work, their master struggled in the borderland betwixt sleep and consciousness.

Then after three hours of driving the rascal bestirred himself. He began with a loud objurgation, and continued with a sweeping lash across the backs of the four plodding beasts at our feet. Galvanised into life, they plunged into their collars and set the heavy carriage rocking beneath us as they broke into a canter. I bethought me anxiously of my seat, which was none too secure, consisting, indeed, only of a heap of horse-clothing thrown loosely on the box. Already I overlapped the rail, and had much ado to grope for it behind and at the side. Clinging to it in the most precarious manner, I was the sport of every bump and the certain prey of the slightest mishap. Never shall I forget that last quarter of an hour. The road had steadily climbed until we seemed to be on a plateau amid the hills. There it meandered over broken ground, diving into hollows, whirling round corners, rushing up slopes. Along this giddy course we raced at full gallop, the brain-fogged maniac beside me yelling at his animals, slashing their heaving backs with his whip, yawing them sharply to right or left by furious dragging upon the reins. The sparkling lights in the skies above only served to make the darkness below more black. The road was merely a line less dense than the shadows that lay thick on the ground. On either hand there seemed to yawn the deepest precipices, every now and then we dashed upon masses of rock that resolved themselves into nothingness. Sometimes the dim mark that proclaimed the road dwindled down to a narrow line promising certain disaster. The galloping animals, spread wide in front, would then close up until the four grey backs were packed tight together, like sardines set edgewise in a box. But always they alternated between a hard canter and a



furious gallop, urged by the madman with the reins, who was now awake with a vengeance. Petrified by apprehension, I clung to my seat momentarily expecting a broken end. On plunged the swaying vehicle amid the black and horrid dangers of the night. It seemed a marvel that wheels or springs stood the strain. It was a miracle that the road was flat as a billiard-table, and that never a bump disturbed the smoothness of our progress. The slightest obstacle would have pulverised the carriage and made corpses of its occupants. Nevertheless, we drew up at a low hut, unharmed, and I know not whether to attribute the powers of Satan to the driver, or the cleverness of angels to the horses, that had accomplished that fearsome career without the shadow of an accident. May the gods protect me from a repetition of it.

I turned the sleeping Agajan out of the comfortable corner he had made in the carriage, and filled it myself, indifferent thereafter what might happen. If the next stage was as exciting as the former, the thrills and emotions were all another's. I slept peacefully until it was over, when my domestic woke me to say that the next driver declined to move before daylight as there were robbers on the road. And that I knew to be true enough, for was not the famous Naib Hussein of Kashan a fugitive in the adjacent hills, vainly pursued by the Government for his sins? This faithful supporter of the ex-Shah had been a bully in Teheran, and had retired to his native province when his master had gone the way of foolish monarchs. In Kashan he harried his ancient enemies to the full, defied the Government, and gathered around him a band of free-lances. His doings became too hot even for Persia, and troops were sent from Teheran. They



protected the town, but could do nothing towards catching the band that took to the hills. The Government employed local tribesmen at a handsome remuneration to effect what could not be done by the regulars. When I passed through, Naib Hussein was still at large, and the tribesmen were clamouring for their pay and cursing the Government that used them without recompense—hence the episode of the looted post. A lawless robbery was indeed but the secret working of the ends of justice, for if the Government would not pay their just debts, the Shahsevens must pay themselves at the expense of the Government.

But I was not to be food for Naib Hussein. We halted until earliest dawn, and then proceeded with much caution. I was requested to have my revolver ready, and ready it was—at the bottom of a bag I could not reach. There was much looking over shoulders, right, left, and in the rear, much anxious scrutiny of distant marks that might be crouching robbers, much trepidation between the driver and my servant. Only I was brave and fearless, for it was with me a deep and solemn conviction that no Persian, saint or robber, ever was up and doing before the sun. Of all the Asiatics the Persian is the one most uncompromisingly bedridden, and ever shameless of being late in the morning. Of course we saw nothing, and when the sun rose we were clear of the hills and launched into the long plain at whose southern end lies the city of Isfahan.

Here scattered around we saw large numbers of gazelle, that slowly trotted off as our lumbering carriage disturbed their neighbourhood. They seemed tame enough and likely game for a simple stalk. In the distance we saw another carriage coming, saw it halt, noted a crouching figure disappear in a fold of the

ground, then heard a shot roll across the plain. The carriage contained his Excellency the Samsam-es-Sultaneh, Governor of Isfahan, *en route* for Teheran, and as we met it there hung from the handle of the door the bleeding carcass of a gentle doe. The carriage itself presented one of the queerest spectacles that a traveller might see, even in Persia. It was a yellow brougham, drawn by four weedy horses. Inside it were three very stout men, judging by the way they bulged out of the windows. Beside the driver sat a hairy Bakhtiari, with the inevitable Martini emerging from between his legs. On the roof squatted two more shaggy figures, precariously balanced, armed with rifles and bandoliers of cartridges. The door handles, the rails, the lamp racks, the axle behind, were all festooned with hanging bundles, sacks, implements of tin and copper. The whole carriage moved with a heavy list to port, and made a noise like a large caravan. As we swept past this quaint arrangement I could not see the great man inside, but his wild followers perched on top scanned us with longing eyes, and a poor chance would we have had but for the presence of their master. He, poor man, had been summoned to Teheran to explain why he governed his province so badly, the truth being that Samsam was a gallant leader of a foray, but no hand at administration.

Meanwhile we steadily approached a village that had long been visible at the far side of the plain. Apparently quite close, it was in reality far away, for the clarity of the Persian atmosphere is truly amazing. That village was a fateful place for me, for when at long last we entered its narrow lanes the carriage suddenly went sick, swayed, lurched, gave a loud rumble, and subsided with a horrible scrunching. The fellows of one wheel had crumpled up, and the axle lay on the



ground. Alas for the prospects of the repairer in Teheran! His *in'am* had vanished into thin air, though it must be said for him that there were no ropes binding the broken part. It was a fault of omission on his part, not of commission. To rage would have been vain. My hopes of getting to Isfahan that day were blasted, for we were still fifty miles distant, and stranded in a Persian village, than which the universe holds nothing less helpful in a crisis. I made up my mind to the necessity of sending a messenger to Isfahan in the hope that a new carriage would arrive within twenty-four hours. Repair of the damaged one was out of the question. Just as a realisation of my misfortune was settling down upon me, I spied in a corner of the caravanserai where I had taken refuge a specimen of the cart or *fourgon* of the country, a springless vehicle dedicated to the transport of merchandise. In solemn tones I demanded to know its owner and its uses. It belonged to the carriage company, but was no fit conveyance for a Sahib and a gentleman. I inquired if it was in order and capable of taking the road. It was. And an hour later, a good breakfast packed tightly inside me, we were jolting along the road at a steady six miles an hour, shaken to bits, deafened by the rattling and jingling, but surely bound for our journey's end, which we safely attained within an hour of the appointed time.

Isfahan is a typical Persian city, built of mud, but with more than the usual quantity of relics of ancient greatness. These have already been frequently described by nimbler pens than mine, so it remains for me only to glance at local politics. These in recent times had been of a tempestuous character. Oppressed by a tyrannous and unscrupulous Governor, the people of Isfahan were delighted when the Bakhtiaris responded





*The Governor of Isfahan has revived the old Persian punishment of burying brigands alive.*



*The Hall of the Forty Pillars at Isfahan.*



to the invitation to come and rid them of the oppressor. The call was sent in the name of the Constitution and accepted on the same account. The Isfahanis cared considerably for the Constitution, for it was to them the only road to a riddance of the abhorred Governor. Samsam-es-Sultaneh, who had a grievance of his own against the Shah, also liked the Constitution, for it gave an excuse to take the field, ostensibly at the bidding of Isfahan, not a little in his own quarrel. All went merrily as a marriage-bell at the beginning, for the Bakhtiari wolves scrupulously respected the lambs within their grasp, made quite a show of obtaining restitution of the loot taken by the Shah's soldiery during the fighting, and, above all, they kicked out the obnoxious Governor, who took refuge in the British Consulate. The Bakhtiaris deeply appreciated the amenities of town life, as well might men whose daily sustenance at home frequently consisted of bread made from acorns. Their hosts housed them well, fed them well, gave them good wine to drink. And at one moment, when it looked as if the Bakhtiaris might be scared back to their mountains by the despatch of a Royal expedition, leaving Isfahan to the Shah's retribution, they even offered them the comforts of matrimony. The mullahs preached from the pulpits sanctioning and advising the fathers of Isfahan to give their daughters to the Bakhtiaris as an inducement to them to remain. Many fathers did, with the consequence that there are many disconsolate widows in Isfahan to-day, not to speak of wailing orphans. It is a curious commentary on the prejudices of Islam that if a Mussulman woman is discovered to be intimate with a Christian her life is forfeit; while that of her paramour, of whatever nationality, or however powerfully protected, may be seriously endangered—in fact, departure from the country



may be necessary in such circumstances. A Persian city will scream with rage if a tipsy Russian soldier peeps over the wall of a harem, and will demand the blood of the culprit. But the same city will suffer dozens of cases of abduction and rape by home-bred ruffians, and never think twice of the matter.

As time went on Isfahan found that it had escaped from the hand of one master only to fall into that of another. The one thousand horsemen who rescued Isfahan from the oppressor had to be paid for, and at a fairly high rate. Very soon Isfahan repented herself of the arrangement, and wished the Bakhtiari elsewhere. Samsam-es-Sultaneh at the same time became most bitter on the subject of the parsimony of his hosts. They would give little or nothing, and, as a champion of Constitutionalism, he could hardly help himself by force. A disagreeable situation was greatly alleviated by the departure of the bulk of his men for the north, since when the Bakhtiari garrison of Isfahan had not exceeded one hundred men.

Upon the unsophisticated mountaineer town life had the usual effect. Extreme poverty in his own country prevents the Bakhtiari from acquiring vicious habits. He marries early, seldom sees money, knows little of the attractions of strong drink, and less of those of gambling. Leading a free and independent life in the hills, he is a cleaner and more decent liver than ever the dweller in a Persian town can be. But carried into the vortex of city life, given pay in cash, tempted on all hands by new and insidious delights, our simple highlander falls an easy prey to the seductions of civilisation. So the once respectable Bakhtiari had become a gambler, a tavern haunter, and a convert to other peculiarly

Persian practices. Discipline, in fact, had been relaxed all round, and the consequence was a marked increase of crime in the city.

The bully is a characteristic feature of the Persian social system. Where the people are soft and effeminate a man of energy and strong character can very easily obtain an ascendancy that the weaker vessels cannot resist. Here and there Persia breeds a rascal that cares neither for God, nor for man, nor for the devil. Such an one becomes a joy to the wicked and a terror to the respectable, for to convict him of crime in a country where money stands for all the virtues is next to impossible. Money he gets by force, and with money he can buy immunity for any offence from petty pilfering up to murder. Such is the situation in Isfahan of a ruffian known as the Major, and properly styled Fath Ali Khan Yāvar. This individual has instigated or committed crime after crime throughout a series of years, and has crowned all past performances by being directly implicated during 1909 in five murders. The last of these was committed in broad daylight, within hail of the British and Russian Consulates-General, only a few days before I arrived at Isfahan. A man and his servant were quietly riding along a main thoroughfare when they were attacked by five armed ruffians. The master fell dead with five bullets in his body, the servant escaped by taking refuge in a drain. The outrage was witnessed by many people, who recognised the culprits as being associates of the notorious Major, who, moreover, had a feud against the victim. Yet neither the principal nor his accomplices had been arrested, though their whereabouts were publicly known. The matter had been weightily represented to the Bakhtiari Governor; but nothing was done,



obviously for the good old Persian reason that the culprits had been able to bribe somebody to leave them alone.

Isfahan has a large population and covers a great area, the policing of which requires a considerable force. Police exist to the number of sixty or seventy, but they are a sorry lot, unpaid, unfed, and unclothed by the Government. To live, therefore, they must find work or take to thieving. They will do any sort of job for a little money, and if legitimate means of earning something are not to hand they are compelled to take to illegitimate methods. An instance of the disorderly condition of the city thus encouraged is furnished by a recent outrage on a European lady. Members of the missionary community in Isfahan have long been respected by the people, and in recent years have seldom had complaints to make about their treatment in the town. Nevertheless Miss Stuart, niece of Bishop Stuart, whose missionary labours in Persia extend over a period of forty years, was attacked in a well-known street about a fortnight before. The time was just after sundown, when Miss Stuart, escorted by a boy with a lantern, was passing from one of the mission buildings to her home. Three men ran up to her, brandishing swords. One held a dagger to her throat while the other two searched her for valuables. Fortunately she had left both watch and money at home, and the rascals finding nothing, let her go unharmed. The incident had no unfortunate results, but is disquieting; for the culprits, of course, have never been punished, or even discovered, and the temptation to similar outrage, in a place where order is relaxed, is greatly increased.

The situation in the Province was equally bad.



Not long before, a large caravan trustingly set forth for Shiraz in the full hope of marching at least 100 miles before reaching the danger zone. But only 10 miles out it ran into the arms of a large band of Kuhgelus, who gathered up baggage, animals, and men at one swoop. Caravan the second marched soon afterwards, and suffered exactly the same fate. Caravan three, in complete ignorance that a scene from "The Forty Thieves" was being enacted a few miles ahead, then followed, and was duly swallowed up by the delighted Kuhgelus—all save one soul, who escaped to tell the tale and warn the town. This within ten miles of the capital of the Province, where the Governor is supposed to sit surrounded by horse, foot, and artillery! Samsam telegraphed to seventy-five of his men at Kumishah—50 miles to the south, which they had been sent to protect against the marauders,—to attack in rear. The seventy-five wisely did nothing of the sort, while Samsam with only twenty-five in Isfahan was powerless. The result was that the Kuhgelus got away with all their booty, and in the comfortable assurance that the hand of the Government was not long enough to reach them. Without a proper garrison Isfahan itself really lay at the mercy of any determined band of robbers who liked to enter. Fortunately for the Isfahanis determination and enterprise are qualities lacking among the unruly elements in Persia, as well as among the orderly, so that such a contingency seems improbable. Since I passed through, the Kuhgelus have repeatedly returned to the neighbourhood of Isfahan; while a letter from that place, dated July, and written to me by a responsible person, states that the Kashghais are harrying up to the gates of the city, and that it would not be surprising if

they made a *coup de main* upon the town itself. This in spite of the fact that there is a new Governor, and that the Teheran Press, in bitterly attacking me for exposing the situation in 'The Times,' declared that perfect order was being maintained in both the town and the Province.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## THROUGH BAKHTIARI LAND.

SOME friendly residents of Isfahan had agreed to start me on my journey across the Bakhtiari mountains, and with an escort of Tiwana Lancers from the Consulate we made quite a large party. The city left behind, and the famous bridge of Ali Verdi Khan crossed, we passed through the Armenian village of Julfa and then found ourselves in open country. The weather was brilliant, with all the charm that bright sun, blue sky, and purple mountain can confer. Mid-winter at a height of 5000 feet is always cold and bracing, and to the exhilaration of fine air was added the attractive prospect of a long journey through new country. It seemed an auspicious beginning; but hardly had the thought crossed my mind than my steed slipped on a patch of frozen ground and came down with a crash. The hardy camera that has been my faithful companion all these years presented the same old corner to my ribs as I fell, and proved itself no softer than of yore. The leg under the fallen horse took all the button marks in the usual way, while the hip on the side next the ground met with a very stiff reception. Nobody in the cavalcade liked this plain warning that the day was an



unlucky one for starting. Remounted, I proceeded as before, until, as we were trotting along perfectly level smooth plain, down came my beast again. The corner of the camera scored another point against my side, the ground got in another sledge-hammer blow on my hip, and the map imprinted upon my leg by the weight of the horse spread itself in all directions. The unfortunate animal barked both its knees, and thus incurred for me the ignominy of having injured another man's property. It looked, indeed, as if I had forfeited the favour of Heaven. Nevertheless I took the chances, called for another mount, and set out once more, amid the horror-stricken murmurings of the native members of the party, who took the man to be mad that could ignore this double intimation of Divine displeasure. Soon afterwards I bade adieu to the kind friends who had accompanied me so far, and rode on to the village of Pul-i-wargan, where I counted to find my caravan bestowed, my tea ready, and a comfortable fire blazing whereat I might warm my hands and soften the stiffness that had crept into my limbs—old bones resent the gymnastics described above. But the caravan, although there had been ample time, was not yet arrived, neither tea nor fire was ready, and I had to wait an interminable time for both. This coming on the top of endless trouble and delay in starting, dispute as to loads, and difficulty about ropes and bridles, indicated that I had made a bad shot at a muleteer—in this case a hang-dog-looking fellow called Reza, who eventually turned out to be the slowest, laziest, and most disagreeable rascal that ever cursed the footsteps of a traveller.

Our night at Pul-i-wargan proved miserably cold, and I was awake and up before the sun reached the

horizon. Everybody else was asleep, and I had the pleasure of turning the sluggards out into the chill air much sooner than they would have preferred. The first ten miles of the day's stage ran across a large plain devoted to the cultivation of rice. Irrigation channels continually barred the way, and their crossing meant the transit of precarious bridges, or the diving into sticky hollows where our animals slipped and floundered. Having crossed this uninteresting region, we began to rise over a long bare slope covered with stones and quite devoid of vegetation. A gentle climb of several miles took us over a low pass from which we could see an enormous valley, fifteen miles across, through which meandered the upper reaches of the Zendeh Rud, already twice crossed since leaving Isfahan.

The scene from the pass is typical of the country. An immense area stretched before us, the ground lying in beautifully defined folds, each with its own shade of russet, or blue or violet. Surrounded by purple snow-topped mountains, and domed by the cobalt of heaven, the colouring is exquisitely mellow and delicate. But what complete desolation! Nothing living to be seen, animal or vegetable. Mile upon mile upon mile of soft flowing lines, unbroken by sign of habitation or of moving figure, desert as it has been since prehistoric times, carved and rounded by the ice of another age, shaped as it was in the beginning of things. Such is the Persian plateau, an immense waste scarce redeemed from utter loneliness by the few delightful spots rescued from the wilderness by the labour of mankind. The great valley before us proved to be, as we advanced across it, not so blank as it seemed, for when we could see into the bed of the river we discovered a series of small villages nestling close under

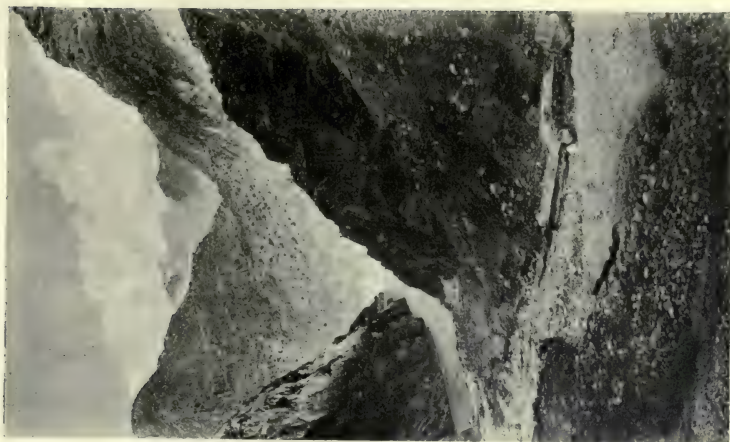


the high banks. Here the Zendeh Rud wanders backward and forward in a narrow band of rich alluvium cut into flats whereof every inch is carefully cultivated. Two hundred yards broad at the most, this pleasant strip formed a sharp contrast to the surrounding desolation; cosily hidden below the general level its position seemed designed for escape from the bleakness above.

It was while crossing this valley that I first encountered Chiragh Ali. Tramping along for the good of my health, with my nag in tow by the reins, I could hear a quick-stepping horse coming up behind me. When it came alongside a shrill voice gave me "Good morning," in English, and looking up I perceived a small boy perched before a man riding a handsome grey Arab. Brown eyes were gazing at me seriously from under the peak of a tweed cap that was many sizes too large for the wearer. My servant rode up and explained that this was Chiragh Ali Khan, son of Samsam-es-Sultaneh, Ilkhani of the Bakhtiari. At this introduction I saluted and got back in response, "Are you quite well?" That exhausted my little friend's stock of English, and henceforward we communicated by interpretation. His father having left Isfahan for Teheran—did I not meet the Samsam's weird equipage on the road!—the boy was homeward bound to see his mother, accompanied by two tutors, his male nurse, and an escort of six sowars. He was greatly exercised to know why I walked when I had a horse to ride, why I carried no gun, and why I travelled without sowars. To these inquiries I replied that I walked because I was strong, like all Englishmen, that I had no gun because I did not want to shoot anybody, and that I had no escort because I supposed travellers were quite safe in his father's country. My replies were unanswerable, though far from convincing



THE KARUN RIVER  
NEAR ITS SOURCE



*The Karun River near its source.*



*Chiragh Ali Khan.*

TO THE  
LIBRARY OF THE  
CONGRESS

to Chiragh Ali, whose ideas were completely otherwise. But he was too polite to argue, and so proceeded to other subjects. The sowars behind, however, were not to be put off so easily. One hard-bitten-looking specimen asked what I would do if I were attacked by robbers. I replied that the well-known gentlemanliness of the Bakhtiaris made that impossible in their country. He accepted the compliment with complacency, but begged me just to suppose that we were attacked—what would I do then? Having had some experience of the kidney, and perceiving the gleam of covetousness in this rascal's eye, I instructed Agajan to explain to him how important a person I was, and that I carried letters to all the Khans from Sirdar Assad. Agajan explained the situation at such length that I demanded to know what he was saying. He was rubbing it in with a vengeance it seemed. Sirdar Assad, according to Agajan, had agreed to cut the right hand off any man who robbed me, and to return the value of stolen property four times over. If I were wounded the culprit would be bastinadoed until he died, and if I were murdered the Bakhtiaris would have to pay 50,000 tomans to the heirs of my body. These unblushing inventions had great effect, and henceforth I was treated with caution; but whether because of the risk of incurring any of the aforesaid penalties, or out of respect for a man whose servant was such a powerful liar, cannot be said. Chiragh Ali was a firm friend of the British Consul-General in Isfahan, and on this account considered himself half an Englishman. His brother, a member of parliament in Teheran, had brought him his overgrown cap from England, and Chiragh Ali meant to go to London himself in the fulness of time to buy rifles and revolvers and swords and other implements of civilisation. Paris



had no attraction for him ; London was his goal. But when little boys grow up they are apt to prefer the former. Paris, indeed, is the bourne of all semi-enlightened Asia.

We spent the night in the village of Madrasseh, in the house of a local notable who put his best room at my disposal. The village being off the road white men were a rarity, in consequence of which we were besieged by sight-seers eager for a glimpse of the Feringhi. Having got rid of the men after a great deal of trouble, I next had to run the gauntlet of the women's eyes. Female modesty was quite eclipsed by feminine curiosity, and the end of their peeping was that half a dozen filed into the room and sat round me in a semicircle to gaze their fill. The Persian woman is such a sacred creature that I was not sorry for the opportunity to reciprocate. And so we sat and looked at each other for about ten minutes, when they could stand it no longer and fled shrieking with laughter. The old ones were about as plain as they could be, the younger plump and not bad looking, while one little girl, aged nine, was as pretty a child as one could wish to see. My host had an old wife and a young one, each with children, and the whole company slept together at night in a circle round a charcoal fire. Over the fire was a low wooden frame, and over that a large quilt which made a hot cave into which all the family legs were thrust. I was cordially invited by the little girl to share the warmth, to the amusement of her mothers, but declined the pleasure owing to the unspeakably unwashed appearance of the company. Madrasseh proved a place of much vexation, for when the time for starting came the muleteers were not forthcoming. It appeared that this was their native village, and that they had retired to the bosoms of their families



*" . . . I was cordially invited by the little girl to share the warmth . . . "*



*Old Bakhtiari Fort at Deh-diz.*





and forgotten all about their duties. There was a terribly long delay before they were rooted out and the caravan set going. It was then that I discovered that Madrasseh was off the road and that I had been tricked into spending the night there. In the morning we had to march back on our own tracks of the previous night. My grievances against the rascal Reza were already considerable, although we were only two days out from Isfahan.

We now resumed the transit of the broad desert valley already described. After a few miles we reached the foot of the mountains forming the far side of the valley, and rose sharply to the Gerdan-i-Rukh, a pass about 7000 feet above sea-level. The ridge constitutes the boundary between Bakhtiari land and Persian territory, as well as the watershed dividing the drainage between Central Persia and the Persian Gulf. From the pass we looked down upon the region where the great Karun river is born. Right in the pass stood a small guard-house built of loose stones, and here were a few wild-looking Bakhtiaris, who, I was glad to find, showed no inclination to shoot me. That might have been because I climbed the pass in company with Chiragh Ali and was engaged in deep conversation with him when we arrived at the guard-house. The tribesmen assailed the little Khan with loud cries of delight, and the tenderness with which he was lifted off his horse could not have been surpassed. I was politely invited to partake of tea, and we all squatted round a little charcoal fire while Chiragh Ali was catechised regarding his experiences in the city of Isfahan. There I left him and proceeded down the hill on foot, leaving my nag to be looked after by the *charvadar*. That rascal let the beast loose among the caravan animals, and all scrambled along together in amity until we

reached level ground, when I decided to mount again. The shaggy, skinny, angular, cow-hocked, ewe-necked, Roman-nosed little rat reserved for my riding, and called a horse out of the purest courtesy, looked as if nothing less than a red-hot poker would make him go faster than a slow walk. He had his eye on me as I waited for him to come up, and when I stretched out my hand to catch the rein he just slewed himself out of reach. I walked unconcernedly after, thinking that if I showed no anxiety he wouldn't either. For half a mile we walked thus, he always a clear length in front whether I moved quickly or slowly. Then I made a dart at him—and missed. Up went his heels and with a squeal he was off. Finally, when I had had much more walking than I wanted, the wretch was chased into a bog, where he sank up to his belly and had to be hauled out by the tail. Remounting, I swore a solemn oath never again to let him go.

The descent from the pass brought us into a long, narrow valley, without trees or sign of habitation. More dreary and desolate a region could hardly be imagined, though in summer the valley is doubtless filled by encampments. After two hours' travelling, however, we reached the village of Qahn-i-Rukh and found ourselves in Chahar Mahal, a great plain dotted with small mud villages. Here our muleteers wanted to halt for the night, but in reward for their dilatoriness in the morning I insisted on proceeding. As this meant another sixteen miles, which could not be accomplished before dark, deep sulkiness prevailed. Pushing ahead with Agajan we rode as hard as my wretched little beast could be persuaded to go, but found ourselves overtaken by darkness without seeing a sign of Shamsabad, the village for which we were bound. We knew nothing about the road, and could only guess that the



track we had hitherto followed was the correct one. For three hours we did not see a living soul, and then as it grew dark we encountered a party of men and donkeys. A meeting of this kind is not always desirable, and we were glad to discover that these people were harmless, as they doubtless were glad to find us. They advised us about the track and we proceeded, leading our animals, for it seemed safer to walk than to ride over such rough ground as we were now crossing. We toiled along in the dark for another hour, and then from the top of a low pass heard dogs barking and saw a few twinkling lights in the valley below. To keep clear of the teeth of the savage watch-dogs that infest Bakhtiari villages, we mounted and rode forward. We were soon detected and surrounded by a pack of vicious brutes that kept up a terrifying chorus of barking and snarling. Our beasts were accustomed to this sort of treatment, however, and marched calmly on into the village, where a wall with turrets, looming huge in the darkness, indicated the castle of the Khan.

Dismounting in the gateway I led my horse forward until stopped by several dark figures who wanted to know our business. I said I was English, whereupon my hands were violently seized and I was cordially invited in my own language to enter. Truly an astonishing reception in such an out-of-the-way place! After the rough travelling of the last few days, and the wild people and country to which we were becoming habituated, subsequent experiences at Shamsabad were like a taste of the magic of the Arabian Nights. Out of the cold starlit night I was led by the hand up a broad flight of steps to a deep verandah, and from thence into a thick-carpeted room, where a large fireplace was filled with gaily burning logs. On the mantelpiece stood a huge gilt-framed mirror, and on the shelf a



gilded clock flanked by large golden ornaments. Richly upholstered furniture was arranged round the walls, and coloured lamps standing on tall brass and crystal pillars cast a soft and glowing light throughout this wonderful chamber. Blinking amid so much brilliance it was some time before I was able to take stock of the good genie who had rescued me from the wilderness and transported me into a palace.

Mehdi Guli Khan he was, and eldest son to Sirdar Zaffar, one of the family of brothers which divides between them the honoured places of Bakhtiari officialdom. He informed me that only that day a number of the principal Khans had arrived at Shamsabad, attended by many horsemen, and that they were now at dinner in another room. Presenting my letters from Teheran, I was received with great kindness by my host, Amir Mujahed, the chief whose entrance to the Mejliss buildings in Teheran at the time of the recent *coup*, in company with Colonel Liakhoff, created so much enthusiasm. I was privileged to witness the cordiality which can exist between the enemies of yesterday who have become the friends of to-day. Amir Mufakham, who fought so loyally for the Shah at Teheran, and inflicted considerable damage upon his own people, was happily hobnobbing with brothers and cousins who only a few months back had sought his life. His ambition had been the coveted Ilkhaniship of the tribes, but his side having lost, he could forget the disappointment and be friendly again with his relatives. Sunshine and cloud are common alternatives among the Bakhtiari hills, and one wonders how long the present harmony may last. I found the chiefs men of liberal ideas, apparently unhampered by the prejudices usually associated with Islam. Two small boys, sons of different Khans, are at present

being brought up by an English lady in Persia, and when I pointed out the danger of their becoming Christians the fathers uttered a complacent *Bismillah*. The guilelessness with which one young chief explained his conversion to Constitutionalism while he was yet fighting ardently for Mohamed Ali before Tabriz was instructive. The Khans apparently had a hard business to decide which was the safer side, and it was only when the Russian troops raised the siege of Tabriz and spoilt the Shah's chances that they began collectively to perceive the merits of the Nationalist cause. I was interested to realise that the usual estimates of Bakhtiari military strength are somewhat exaggerated. Apparently the number of mounted men regularly maintained is only 900, so that the force of 2000 raised for the march on Teheran was collected with some difficulty. The Bakhtiaris have few horses, and those mostly of inferior quality, though the Khans, of course, are well mounted. Arms are another weakness, for hitherto the tribesmen have only possessed Martinis, though 1000 small-bore Lebel rifles, recently obtained from Teheran, will considerably add to their resources. Their power for defence is much greater than for offence, as the number of infantrymen they can put in the field is only limited by the number of rifles available. All Bakhtiaris are supposed to be born soldiers, but they would be more useful in this respect if they knew the rudiments of musketry. As it is, they keep their rifles filthily dirty, and do not understand the use of the sights as regards range.

Not long after my arrival dinner was brought in, and a more excellent meal I never want to eat. The principal dish was a huge plate of *pilau* flavoured with currants, raisins, cloves, cinnamon, and other spices. Hidden in this mountain of rice was a young lamb



boiled whole, and so tender that the flesh came off with the slightest pull. Stewed mutton, boiled chicken, and roasted partridge were minor dishes. Delicious pickled walnuts, excellent cheese, and a huge heap of the large flaps that do duty as bread in Persia, were conspicuous, as were a dish of *masth*, that form of curdled milk known as *yourt* in Turkey and by various other names throughout Central Asia. In the *masth* was a sliced vegetable that must have been some sort of radish, the two forming a delightful combination of tastes. To drink there was orange sherbet served with delicate pear-wood ladles from a great Chinese bowl. That morning I had breakfasted at seven o'clock, and throughout the livelong day, while we had travelled over thirty miles, of which I had walked the greater part, never a bite had passed my lips. What a blessed thing is the conjunction of a strong appetite and a good meal. After a comfortable night and a large repast in the morning on the same generous lines as the night before, I took leave of my host. I had received the greatest kindness and attention both from the owner of the house and from the other Bakhtiari chiefs assembled there, and left with the impression that it would be difficult to encounter more pleasant people. The letters from Teheran no doubt helped to smooth the way, but apart from these introductions I have no doubt that I should still have been well received, for the Bakhtiaris have long been known for their friendliness to strangers in general and to British travellers in particular. One consequence of the letters was the attachment to my person of two sowars, who were instructed to give me every assistance on the road, and on no account to leave me until I was safely bestowed in Shushter.

We next reached Shelamzar and were hospitably



accommodated in the house of Samsam-es-Sultaneh. The Ilkhani himself being in Teheran, it devolved upon Chiragh Ali to entertain us, and that he did right well, promising faithfully to visit me in London when his inches would no longer serve his mother as an excuse to keep him at home. Here we were confronted by a precipitous mountain-range, already snow-clad, crossed by the Gerdan-i-Zirreh, a pass about 9000 feet high. This formidable obstacle, however, was yet but lightly covered with white, and we hoped on the morrow to follow a path trodden down by venturesome wayfarers. But luck was against us, for snow fell during the night, and in the morning the whole countryside was six inches deep. This first check kept us back a day, but on that following the mule-teers agreed to start after the sun had softened the snow. It was a wearisome climb for men and horses, but worth the toil, for the summit of the pass revealed a panorama of plain and mountain ravishing to the eye and amply compensating for a New Year's Day so hardly spent. Two days of unending ups and downs brought us to the curious bridge at Dopulan, where the Karun, emerging from a dark ravine, rushes through a narrow crack in a stupendous mass of rock.

We had now reached the most critical stage of the journey, for between the next two ridges lies a depression where the winter snow is said to accumulate to a depth of fifteen feet. This section of the route claims an annual toll of victims, frozen to death in sudden storms that sweep down from the surrounding heights. But we effected a crossing of the dreaded region in the loveliest of weather, climbing 3000 feet in bright sunshine, through a thin forest of gnarled and stunted oak-trees, and over rocky ground alive

with clucking partridge that continually rose from under our feet and flew away with a clamour of wings that echoed loudly among the ravines. It was hard travelling for horse and mule, but the magnificent view that widened with every step was infinitely delightful to the human eye. Deep down behind us lay the purple gorge of the Karun, beyond to right and left rose mountain masses whose dazzling tops reached 13,000 feet. Everywhere stretched the exquisite vision of blue sky, white hill and violet slope, that symphony of colour unequalled among the beauties of nature.

After a cold and wet night spent in the tents near the village of Sarkhun, we found ourselves confronted by another offshoot of the Kuh-i-Zerreh, entailing a climb of more than 2000 feet over abominably rough ground, and over long stretches of slippery snow where the horses floundered badly. A most wearisome march to the top of the spur was rewarded by magnificent scenery to south and west. Parallel to our direction flowed the Karun, hidden in a deep gorge, whose windings occasionally gave a glimpse of flashing water. In the far distance a new range of mountains stretched right across our front like a wall. Insignificant in height and breadth as compared with others, the Kuh-i-Mungasht, from the point where we first gained an uninterrupted view of it, impressed me as being as majestic a range as could be imagined. It occupied a very large section of the horizon to the south-west, stretching in one precipitous rampart of uniform height as far to right and left as we could see. An overcast sky threatening bad weather gave a dark and gloomy effect to its formidable bulk, draped in shadow below, dimly white above. The distance blotted out all detail, and gave the impression that the huge, round-topped,



*The Kuh-i-Girreh.*



*A Gorge of the Karun River.*





bluff-sided barrier was without break, and unapproachable from the long dark valley that lay stretched at its feet. Dropping rapidly, intervening hills soon shut us off from this fine spectacle, while the ever-darkening skies warned us of the necessity to hurry for shelter. In due course we arrived at what is called by courtesy the caravanserai of Shelil, an institution that had nothing to recommend it but its musical name. Imagine a large courtyard three feet deep in dung, with roofless stalls around three sides and doorless rooms round the other; cover the floors of each of these rooms with more dung, let the roofs be full of holes and the floors be pitted for fireplaces, and you have this delectable refuge for the traveller.

I selected the least dilapidated of the rooms, and my following joined in with the person who was supposed to look after the caravanserai. This individual pays a high price for the privilege of occupation, and the opportunity to overcharge the humble but cantankerous muleteer. The nearest village was a day's march distant—there are no houses at Shelil—so he had a monopoly of the supplies, and immediately began to exercise it on my unfortunate *charvadar*. Reza came to me with tears in his voice and complained bitterly of the prices charged for forage. He got very little sympathy from me, however, for a more unsatisfactory rascal never stepped. I merely remarked that if he got up a little earlier in the morning he would not be so easy to swindle. Needless to say, pale humour of this sort was wasted upon him. The climax of his sorrow was yet to come. That evening it commenced to rain. All night it rained, and in the morning it was coming down in sheets. A start was impossible, and as the skies were black with clouds there seemed every chance of our being weather-bound for the day

and another night. That gave the monopolist another opportunity, and he raised his prices still more. But I had my own troubles, for my roof leaked furiously, first by drops in one place, then in two, then three, and so forth, until there were no less than thirteen dribblets pouring into the room. It was easy to avoid the first few, but after they ran into double figures I found myself kept busy searching for dry zones. My first care was my bed, and by grace I was able to save it, and everything I could put under it; but the wet got at most of my other things and made the situation generally miserable. Outside a great storm was raging, and peals of thunder followed each other in quick succession. Altogether it was a wild day, and one felt, in this narrow valley, surrounded by high mountains, that the warring of the elements might easily cause a land-slide which would rub caravanserai and occupants completely out of existence. Towards evening, however, the storm abated, and occasionally the mists opened and gave us a glimpse of distant mountains, now thickly whitened far down their sides.

During the day I had been visited by a young man who said he was the headman of a neighbouring village. He was better dressed and less dirty than his fellow-countrymen, and quite distinguished in appearance. Having explained who he was, he informed me that he received a salary from one of the British Consuls. Supposing myself to be on the verge of discovering some dark political design entailing the expenditure of secret service funds, I caused the gentleman to be closely questioned, when it appeared that his salary was no more than a present once received from a wandering Englishman—all travellers are Consuls—probably in exchange for eggs and chickens. Perceiving the drift of the salary conversation, I gave



my visitor a cigarette and intimated that I was busy. He went away somewhat crestfallen, but offered to come again when I was not occupied. Come again he did the next morning, when I was packing up for a start. I gave him a cigarette, but he still hung about, obviously hoping for something more substantial. To get rid of him, I gave him a two-kran piece (eight-pence), remarking to my servant that I had thought Bakhtiaris were soldiers, not beggars. Agajan promptly translated my observation, thereby greatly hurting my friend's feelings—but not sufficiently to make him give back the money.

From Shelil we dropped 1500 feet and crossed the Rudbar river, a tributary of the Karun. Here the bridge is one of two suspension-bridges constructed for the Bakhtiaris by Messrs Lynch Brothers, who also made parts of the road I had been travelling over, whereby hangs a tale to be told later on. All the way down from Shelil we had fronted what looked like a precipice up the face of which wound a narrow track. It seemed inconceivable that loaded animals could accomplish such a climb; but the muleteers took it as a matter of course, so there was nothing to be said. The map puts the bridge at 3080 feet and the top of the rise at 6400 feet, so we had our work cut out. A good deal of the track zigzagged up slopes of 45 degrees, but the average angle must be less, for the apparent precipice lost much of its steepness when we began actually to climb. But to the traveller coming down from Shelil the ascent confronting him looks truly remarkable, and more severe in appearance than anything of the kind I have ever seen. That day I walked all the way down from Shelil, and all the way up the ascent described, and by the time I got to the top I was literally cooked. But I am proud to say that I

never once halted to rest, though it must be admitted that my pace was of the elderly order. But the sowars behaved like old women, resting and panting and groaning and grunting all the way up. They could not decently ride owing to the steepness, and so had to walk, very much against their wills. One was an old man, and there was some excuse for him, but the other was a lusty young ruffian for whom I had no sympathy.

After a drop of 1200 feet we came to the village of Deh-i-Diz, where lived a petty Khan. We routed him out, but he would not take us in, and seemed quite unable to induce any of the other people to do so. The houses here were extremely miserable, and the dirt and squalor of the children really dreadful to contemplate. It began to look as if we should have to spend a cold night in the tents, when Agajan bestirred himself and ended by persuading a respectable-looking man to let me have his best room for a price. But no sooner had I entered than a raging woman appeared and bitterly reproached the man in front of my face. One does not often see such an exhibition of feminine temper in a Mussulman country, but the lady was evidently greatly exercised about the safety of her things. She was appeased when she heard that only the Feringhi was to occupy the room, and that he was to pay well for it. Then I took possession, as well as the sight-seers would allow. The room had no windows, and no carpet, and had only mud walls. But it had that most essential accessory in cold weather, a fireplace. Moreover, two hens were sitting on eggs in holes in the wall, which conferred an air of homely comfort. The difficulty was that the hens liked to go outside occasionally for fresh air, and the getting them back before the eggs caught cold was a business that em-



ployed a great number of people many times during the course of the evening. An uneventful night was followed by an exciting morning. Agajan lost a shirt, and various other things, which nobody would confess to having taken. Usually it would be the business of the sowars to recover stolen goods, but as these gentry made no particular efforts it is not unlikely that they knew more of the missing articles than they ought. Several people came into my room when I was packing up. They went about handling things and popping them into dark corners, in the hope that these articles would be overlooked. Agajan had got very cunning, however, and defeated this manœuvre several times. Finally we were ready to start, when I missed my fur-lined gloves, which I had carefully put down in a prominent place so that they might not be forgotten. We hunted high and low, and finally found them on a high shelf far back out of sight. The Bakhtiaris are, indeed, absolute champions at pilfering, as every traveller amongst them has found to his cost. Layard, who had a lengthy experience of them, recounts how they stole the shoes off his horse during the night. Taking the horse itself would have raised a hullabaloo, but the thieves cleverly calculated that the shoes would not be missed until it was too late to make a fuss.

From Deh-i-Diz we descended 2800 feet to Godar-i-Balutak, where the other of the Lynch suspension-bridges spans the Karun, here emerging from a magnificent gorge, of which I was fortunate to obtain a good photograph. We were now at 2400 feet, and practically at the end of the trying series of ups and downs which had constituted the previous week's marching. The next stage to Malamir, though not entailing a high climb, proved the most laborious of all our marches, owing to the terrible roughness of the track. We were



nine hours on the move, and arrived quite fagged out. Part of the way ran over an ancient road constructed of large round stones that were infinitely difficult for man and horse. The only object of interest encountered was several small caves in the face of a precipice where, I was informed, in ancient Parsi times the old people used to be shut up until they died. Evidently it is better to be an aged Parsi in a civilised country to-day than to have been a decrepit Zoroastrian in the Persia of long ago.

Malamir is a large plain fairly thickly populated by settled Bakhtiaris, who were busy ploughing the ground when we arrived. At several points in the neighbourhood there are ancient sculptures and inscriptions, some of which were visited by Layard during that interesting residence in Bakhtiari-land so delightfully described in his 'Early Adventures.' Here we were again compelled to put up the tents, owing to the inhospitality of the inhabitants, who, moreover, made considerable difficulties about supplies. The Bakhtiaris, apart from the Khans, who are kindness and friendliness personified, indeed are disobliging people, even when it is to their own advantage to be otherwise. Frequently we tried to purchase a lamb from the flocks encountered grazing by the road. But in no case would the shepherds sell, on the ground that they were waiting until the lambs grew big, when they would sell them as sheep. We offered to give the full price of a sheep for a lamb, but even that would not fetch them, money-grubbers though they are. On one occasion, in response to a request for milk, a small bowlful was brought, for which they demanded a price twelve times as great as is usually paid for a similar quantity in Persia proper. We offered four times the usual price, but this was sulkily refused. This where there were large herds of cattle,

and where everything in the shape of milk must have been plentiful.

Being desirous of visiting the newly opened oil-fields in the neighbourhood of Shushter, I now left the ordinary trade route to Ahwaz, followed by the Lynch road, and made two disagreeable marches to Goorgeer, where we camped for the night in the middle of the village. I ought here to remark that the headman of the village where we spent the previous night behaved like a gentleman, for he sent me a present of fowls, eggs, milk, and firewood, and really required some persuasion to accept a money present in exchange. But Goorgeer was a trying experience, for the dogs barked far into the night and the people never ceased from quarrelling amongst themselves. One old woman gave the headman no rest, for she had been robbed by somebody and was keen on redress. Her reproaches coming to a noisy climax — this while I was waiting in a hut for my tent to be erected—one rascally-looking fellow exclaimed in a tone of righteous indignation, "Are the Bakhtiaris thieves?" whereunto the assembled multitude answered with honest pride, "God forbid!" —so translated Agajan, with curling lip.

## CHAPTER XV.

## THE ANGLO-PERSIAN OIL COMPANY.

OIL in Persia is a very old story, and people of vivid imagination and much faith in their own discernment will tell one that the fire-worshipping of ancient Persia was a consequence of the flames that burned eternally where the oil spurted from the ground. The spot meant in this connection is Baku, the great Russian oil-field on the Caspian, once Persian territory. There appears to be a belt of oil-bearing country stretching down from the Caucasus to the Persian Gulf, manifestations of the presence of the precious fluid being frequent both on the Turkish and Persian sides of the frontier line. The phenomenal success of the Baku wells had drawn inquiring looks towards Persia, but owing to the existence of a concession giving a monopoly of mining enterprise throughout that country nothing could be done. But the company owning this concession, having lost over £100,000 in prospecting and in importing machinery, though not in connection with oil, gave up working. On the expiration of its rights General Kitabji Khan, an Armenian officer in the service of the Shah, obtained the exclusive right to work and develop oil in Persia, and immediately sold his concession to a Mr D'Arcy, a wealthy Australian interested in mining.



The transfer was recognised by the Persian Government, and the new owner was given exclusive rights for sixty years from 28th May 1901. D'Arcy set to work at once, and after a period of prospecting fixed upon a point to commence operations. This point was near Kasr-i-Shirin, close to the Turkish frontier, and distant from the Persian Gulf some 300 miles. The disadvantages of this selection were numerous, the principal being the expense of establishing communication with the sea in the event of the oil being discovered in paying quantity. Another serious objection was that, owing to the mountainous character of the intervening country on the Persian side, a pipe to carry the oil to the coast for refining and shipment would have to be carried across the Turkish border, and then, at a suitable point, back into Persian territory, thereby causing endless complications. After expenditure on an enormous scale, owing to the extreme difficulty of transporting machinery in a roadless country, oil was duly struck in considerable quantity, but only for it to be recognised, in the circumstances just set forth, as valueless. The oil was there, but it would not pay to transport it. D'Arcy had now expended as much money as he cared, and it looked as if the enterprise might be abandoned. But it was well known that there were oil manifestations at other points nearer the sea, and eventually D'Arcy enlisted the interest of the Burma Oil Company. This concern was ready enough to come in, not so much because they were in love with the prospects, but because they did not want to see the concession snapped up by some of the great rival trusts.

The new syndicate began prospecting in southwestern Persia, and eventually commenced boring operations at two points in the Bakhtiari country.

In 1907 full success was obtained at Maidan-i-Naphthun, thirty miles east of Shushter, and operations were thenceforth concentrated there, the other field being temporarily abandoned. In due course ample proof of the extent and richness of the oil strata was obtained, and the syndicate proceeded to business. Two exploitation companies had already been constituted in order to conform to the terms of the concession, but in April 1909 these were merged in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, Limited, with a capital of £2,000,000. But only £800,000 in the shape of Preference Shares and Debenture Stock was offered to the public, all the ordinary shares being retained by the syndicate, composed of, principally, the Burma Oil Company and, in lesser degree, Mr D'Arcy, Lord Strathcona, and others. The issue was a great success, for the subscription list was full half an hour after being opened, thousands besieging the issuing banks in London and Glasgow. The money subscribed is to be devoted to recouping the syndicate for the heavy expenses of prospecting and of preliminary work, said to have cost £300,000. The remainder goes to the erection of a refinery near Mahommerah and the construction of a pipe-line from the oil-field to supply the raw material to the refinery. It is worth noting that the Burma Oil Company and the co-vendors guarantee a dividend of 6 per cent for five years to the holders of the Preference Shares, this to cover the period before the business is in full swing. But as the pipe-line and refinery plant are expected to be ready within three years from April 1909, the concern should be earning a dividend on its own account long before the expiration of the guarantee. By the terms of the concession the Persian Government receives 16 per cent of the shares of the Company, while the Bakhtiaris get 3 per cent



of the net profits on the sale of the oil extracted from the wells situated in their country. Success, therefore, means a handsome revenue for the Persian Government and a substantial annual payment to the Bakhtiariis.

From this short sketch of the history of the oil enterprise, and of the present position of the Company engaged in it, I now turn to the field of operations as I found it on my arrival. Some time before actually reaching the place where work is being conducted, I found signs of the nasty product which the modern world prizes so highly. Laboriously scrambling up a small river-bed our noses were repeatedly assailed by a noxious smell to which paraffin, brimstone, sulphur, and rotten eggs would appear chiefly to contribute. Not long afterwards we came to huge ugly brown clots of the oil itself, lying on the stones and poisoning the neighbourhood. These appeared to have floated down the stream, and to have got stranded on the way. I incautiously trod on one of the patches, and only succeeded in freeing my foot by trailing the long sticky serpent that adhered to it several yards over the stones. Soon afterwards we sighted buildings and tents perched on the hillside, and a few minutes later I was hospitably received by Mr Reynolds, the general field-manager of the Company. Having been without food for ten hours, I was very glad to have lunch while my host very kindly put me in possession of a few of the leading facts relating to the enterprise.

It appears that the oil exists in large quantity in a tract that has been proved to be nearly three miles long and of considerable width, and may, of course, be much greater. Eight wells have been drilled to a depth varying between 1600 and 3000 feet, boring operations being stopped either when the oil spouted or when the geological cap, proved by mining experi-



ence to cover oil deposits, was reached. It was possible to stop the flow of oil in some of the wells, but in others it spouted so strongly that when the pipe was capped the oil forced its way up outside the piping and escaped in great quantity. This process is now proceeding and the oil running to waste in the ravines, efforts to preserve it being of little avail. It was at the oil-fields that I heard that the storm which we experienced at Shelil had been prevalent all over south-western Persia, and that six inches of rain fell in thirty hours, an unprecedented experience where the total fall averages only eight inches per annum. The tremendous amount of water which fell during the storm washed great masses of the semi-congealed oil down the local streams, which eventually carried them into the Karun river, to the great excitement of the Arabs on its banks.

I spent some time trying to worry out how the oil ever comes to exist far down in the ground, and this is how it was explained to me. In the sea of to-day exist, as they probably did in those of past geological ages, microscopic organisms known as foraminifera. These little beasts densely inhabit the water, though one cannot see them, and they keep dying by the million, the corpses sinking to the bottom. The floors of ancient oceans are supposed to be covered with a deposit of these dead bodies, each containing an infinitesimal speck of oil. After the flight of ages and the occurrence of great geological changes there exists far underground an old ocean bed, part of it a stratum representing the dead foraminifera of other times. Time and great pressure have acted upon their remains so as to bring the specks of oil together, leaving other matter to sink, or perhaps to swim. It reads like a tissue of lies, but such, or something like it, I

understand to be the latest and most approved theory to account for underground oil. The getting down to it is an interesting process, magic when you don't understand, simple when you do. First is required an erection about 80 feet high, known in mining circles as a rig. From the top of the rig hangs a chain or a wire rope, and at the end of the rope is attached a driller, a heavy steel beam with sharp but broad edge like a chisel weighing two or three tons. A steam-engine behind the rig hoists the driller and lets it down automatically from a height on its point. The diameter of the driller is only a few inches, so the impact with the ground is tremendous. The dropping operation performed continuously and exactly on the same spot soon produces a hole whether the ground be mud or sand or solid rock, the last named indeed being the easiest of all to work. Whenever an appreciable hole is made a long iron cylinder is fitted into it and henceforth the driller works inside the cylinder. Water is always kept in the hole so that the driller plunging into it keeps the refuse liquid. Periodically a pump is inserted which sucks out the liquid containing the pounded earth or rock. It should be mentioned that the driller is automatically turned so that the edge is always striking the bottom of the hole at a different angle. When the edge gets blunt a new head is easily fitted to the driller. As the driller bores downward the cylinder is let into the hole by degrees, and when flush with the ground another cylinder is screwed to the top, and the process is continued, cylinder after cylinder being added until the oil is reached. Deep boring produces complications which result in the gradual reduction of the bore of the cylinder. Commencing perhaps with 12 or even 15-inch cylinders for the first few hundred feet, they gradually become



smaller and smaller until at a depth of 3000 feet the pipe may be no more than four inches in diameter. Each time there is a change of bore new piping has to be introduced from top to bottom, so that wells sometimes have their top few hundred feet composed of six concentric rings of iron piping, another few hundred feet with five rings, then four, and so on, until the length of single small-bore piping at the bottom. Drillers, of course, must vary in size so as to bore out the diameter to take the required size of cylinder. Given suitable ground, I understand that a depth of one thousand feet can be bored in two months working day and night shifts, at a cost of something like £12,000, cost varying greatly, of course, according to venue, price of transport, labour, and so forth.

Mr Reynolds, who is now in charge of the field operations of the oil company, has been connected with the enterprise from the very beginning. He started the work near Kasr-i-Shirin, and his account of the difficulties encountered in transporting machinery from Baghdad to the scene of action, the obstacles put in his way by the natives, and the great hardships endured, make up an entertaining narrative. The author of it is an optimist, of course, or he could hardly have persevered with his task. There came a period, after operations had been transferred to the Bakhtiari country, when the syndicate appears to have given up hope of success, and actually to have contemplated the abandonment of the work, a course which would have involved a very heavy financial loss. The representative on the spot, however, strenuously advocated a policy of perseverance, with the result that the oil was discovered in the nick of time. Mere dribblets were of no use from a commercial point of view; what was wanted was a spouting fountain of oil. And one



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*Maidan-i-Naphthun.*



*Baku—whose fortune was made by oil.*



*Rigs at Baku.*

day it came, to the huge delight of the camp, shooting high into the air and drenching the rig from top to bottom. Analysis of the oil shows it to be of high grade, and rich in those numerous by-products which form such an important feature of the oil industry.

Truly a beautiful commercial prospect. But from other points of view Maidan-i-Naphthun is surely one of the ugliest places in the world. The dirty grey and yellow hills that surround it are desolate and forbidding to a degree. Not a tree or a bush is to be found within twenty miles, and when I was there not a blade of grass to relieve the horrid monotony. All the water is bad, and none sweet is to be found under a day's march. The temperature in summer goes up to 120 degrees Fahrenheit in the shade. Fresh food is procured from a distance with infinite difficulty. The European employees live either in tents or in most uncomfortably small squat buildings that are furnaces in the hot weather and ice-boxes in winter. Those early on the scene underwent hardships of the kind that result in grey hair.

An inspection of the camp proved highly interesting, though my untechnical eye failed to understand much of what it saw. But there was no mistaking the blackened earth surrounding the well-heads, or the pressure of the oil on the screwed caps, evident in the shape of continuous hissing and bubbling. Two large tanks excavated in the ground were full of the crude article, while horrid brown masses of it floated undulating and wriggling on the water of a small stream. The stench absolutely pervaded the atmosphere, most unpleasant to my unsophisticated nose, but balm to those who live in it and work upon it. People used to oil-fields are said to go sick when they breathe untainted air, and to require in their waistcoat-pockets a small



phial of their precious oil to inhale from when they take a holiday. A large workshop in which mechanics of various nationalities were busy is a feature of the camp. A powerful oil-engine drives the machinery, and will later on be employed to work a dynamo which is to provide electricity for lighting and other purposes. Belching black smoke from a dozen chimneys indicates that the product of the wells is used for cooking in the houses. Large sheds and stabling accommodation are provided for the transport establishment, which consists of about 150 mules and a dozen carts of the kind with two pairs of enormous broad-tyred wheels joined by a heavy beam. To draw these contrivances when loaded with the cylinder lengths described, six pairs of mules are required. As existing mule tracks were useless for heavy transport, one of the necessities of the enterprise was a road to the Karun river, forty miles long. Another feature of the camp is a dispensary to which the natives flock, sometimes from distances of a hundred miles. The medical officer of the Company does valuable work, not only professionally but diplomatically, for his powers as a healer give him an influence with the people that has frequently been of great service to his employers. One of his principal uses in the camp itself is to perform operations for stone, which is very prevalent owing to the saline character of the water. As proof of the Doctor's prowess in dealing with this ailment I was shown a large heap of gravel at the back of the dispensary.

The affairs of the oil syndicate have given rise to difficulties of a serious kind with the Bakhtiari, and nothing goes further to demonstrate Bakhtiari ignorance of the world and affairs generally than the behaviour of the Khans a few years ago. A stipulation of the agreement between the Bakhtiari and the syndi-

cate was that guards should be provided for the exploitation camps. £2000 per annum was to be paid for this protection, against which the Bakhtiaris were to be responsible for the safety of life and property, and to give compensation for loss from robbery. Despite the guards, however, the greatest inconvenience was suffered from continuous and systematic robbing of material. Complaints were rudely met and relations became generally strained. In 1907 a European employee of the syndicate was assaulted in the neighbourhood of the fields; the headman of a village appeared on the scene and stopped drilling operations; the manager of the fields was actually threatened by his own guards. In addition to this provocation, the Bakhtiaris threatened to denounce the agreement and to divest themselves of responsibility for the safety of the employees, if claims for compensation for robberies continued to be presented. In this intolerable state of affairs the quarterly instalment of the guard money was withheld as a protest. A deputation of the Khans then visited the Legation in Teheran, demanding payment of the money withheld, and the transfer of negotiations from the Ahwaz Consulate to that of Isfahan, the official of the former place not pleasing them on account of his support of the oil syndicate's claims. Both demands met with a refusal, whereupon the deputation formally repudiated responsibility for the protection of the camp. Meanwhile the Legation had been pressing for the punishment of the assailants of the oil company employee who had been assaulted in July. As no steps were taken by the Bakhtiaris the Legation applied to the Persian Government, which put pressure on the Khans, with the result that the offenders were publicly beaten in October. Thieving still continued at the oil-camps, however, and as there seemed no



prospect of improvement, the home Government took a step that had been long in contemplation, and which redounds very much to their credit. Two British officers, eight sowars, and twelve native infantry were brought from India and sent up to the oil-fields. As protection this small force was, of course, totally inadequate, but it proved amply sufficient to convince the Bakhtiaris that the British Government intended to stand no more nonsense. They climbed down immediately, since when matters have gone much more smoothly and it has been found possible to withdraw the Indian guards. This, of course, is an old story now, and it is satisfactory to know that relations have greatly improved of late. That is as it should be, for the Bakhtiaris have nothing to gain by being obstructive, but everything to lose. Besides the annual payment for guards they might derive large profit from the sale of supplies, but in this matter the local tribesmen have proved so rapacious that it has been found cheaper to import from outside. If the Bakhtiaris are wise they will realise that the development of the field, and consequently their own share in the profits, depends to a considerable extent on the assistance and support which they extend to the company.

As regards the future of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, it is difficult to express an opinion, for the condition of the oil market, owing to the operations of trusts and the discovery of many new fields, is such that it may not pay at present to extract more than a limited amount. In any case, development can only proceed at a sedate pace, for the refinery now in course of construction will only be able to manufacture 2,000,000 gallons per month, whatever the output of crude oil may be. Should there occur in the future, however, any remarkable increase in the demand for oil, there is



little doubt that the quantity just mentioned might be increased indefinitely by the provision of additional refining facilities. Of the raw material it would appear as if the supply were almost illimitable, for not only is there the field at Maidan-i-Naphthun, itself equal in area almost to the Baku field, but there are other spots adjacent where oil unquestionably exists. The determining factor in the success of this venture, then, would appear not to be the amount of oil available, but the elasticity of the market in which it is sold.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## THE KARUN RIVER.

HAVING been hospitably entertained by Mr Reynolds and his staff I left the oil-field next day, and after eleven hours riding over most repulsive country reached Shushter, to find my belongings, sent independently from Goorgeer, comfortably installed in the house of Mr Solomon, the agent of Lynch Brothers. Here I had to wait for the small stern-wheeler which plies between Ahwaz and a point seven miles below Shushter, beyond which the river is not conveniently navigable. The comfort of a proper house was very welcome after the rough journey over the mountains, while my host was most assiduous in showing me the local sights, which were varied and interesting. There are few stranger towns to be found than Shushter, a blessed place in the eyes of the inhabitants, but one of the filthiest in the world according to travellers. A local mullah of high repute who came to visit me explained that the word Shush—the famous ruins of the city of Shushan, where Daniel was given to the lions, is in the neighbourhood—means good, fine, beautiful, bountiful, and all the rest of it, and that Shushter is the superlative of the same word. I like to see a man stick up for his native place, but in the present case there would seem to be little jus-



*Shushan, showing the excavations of the French Archæological Expedition.*



*The Tomb of Daniel at Shushan.*





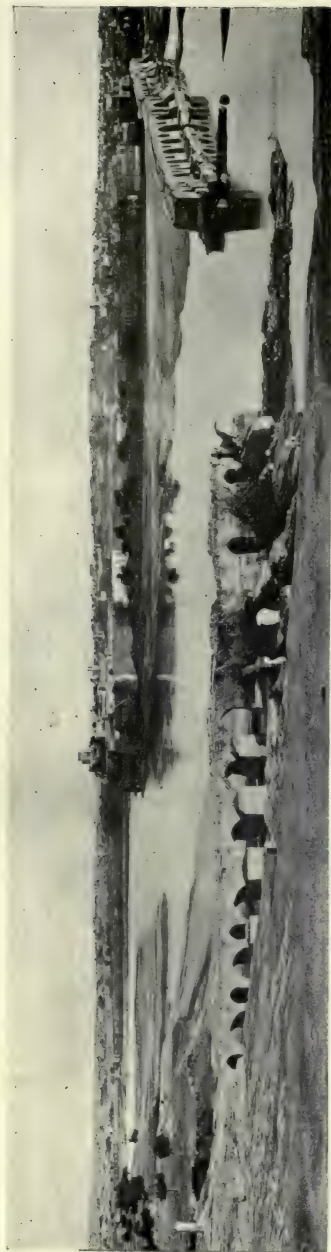
tification for municipal pride. Epidemics of plague and cholera eighty years ago ruined Shushter, and where were 45,000 inhabitants and a large trade, there are now only some 6000, while trade is stagnant. The consequence is a large area of ruined and tumble-down houses, desolate bazaars, and a prevailing air of forsakenness. There is another air, too, very prevalent and truly abominable. Shushter streets are everywhere so narrow that outstretched hands will touch either wall. Despite this, sanitary and scavenging arrangements are such that every house must discharge its superfluities into the narrow lanes by which the people go up and down. Each house has a small cave opening on to the street at the ground-level. Down a tunnel into this cave is shot the household rubbish, morning, noon, and night, to the utter empoisoning of the air. Nevertheless these narrow streets and the curious architecture are inexpressibly quaint, and quite unlike anything to be found elsewhere in Persia.

Shushter is unique in another respect. A mile upstream a canal takes off from the Karun and flows past the eastern side of the town, leaving the river to skirt the western side, the town itself being built upon a low eminence between. Level with the town a magnificent bridge spans the river by means of thirty arches, several of which were swept away by floods eighteen years ago, thus severing connection between the banks. The peculiarity of this bridge, attributed to Valerian, is that it is built on a cement embankment evidently constructed with a view to raising the level of the water for the purposes of irrigation. Whether or no the embankment or barrage was part of the canal scheme and constructed so as to force water into the canal, is learnedly discussed by Lord Curzon. What interests the visitor

is to find that the canal, known as the Ab-i-Gerger, on reaching the town is confronted by a heavy masonry wall, at each side of which are curious tunnels through which the stream pours violently. Emerging on the other side the water is diverted into a number of different channels cut out of the solid rock. Over these channels are built mill-houses, and through them the water courses, turning the mills on the way. Having done its work, in some cases two or three times over, the water then plunges into a deep seething pool on the lower side of the embankment. The latter is used as a bridge, and from it the visitor first catches sight of the remarkable scene below; spell-bound he halts to examine so Moses-like a phenomenon. Out of nearly twenty tunnels piercing the rock at different levels the water gushes, pouring with a noise like thunder into the boiling pool. The mills being covered, the why and wherefore of this strange arrangement is mysterious, until understood. The explanation is that the rock is soft sandstone which lends itself easily to cutting, and that the townspeople, at one time or another, have ingeniously availed themselves of the natural advantages. It is, however, not absolutely established that the Ab-i-Gerger is artificial, though the embankment of course is, as well as two bunds projecting into it up-stream of the embankment. It would be interesting to determine whether the canal was made with a view to milling facilities, or whether the idea of milling was evolved from the proximity of the water to the soft rock. In any case the result is most picturesque, and supposed to be without parallel elsewhere in the world.

The most pleasant place in Shushter is the fort, a





*The Karun River, showing Valerian's Bridge, the Fort and the Town of Shushter.*



*The Ab-i-Gerger, and the wonderful Millstreams.*



*" . . . so Moses-like a phenomenon, . . . "*

TO THE  
MEMBERS

walled erection occupying a sandstone bluff overlooking the Karun. The heat in summer is terrific, but if there is any coolness to come in the evenings, it will surely be found in the pleasant topmost storey of the house in the fort, a many-windowed chamber commanding a fine view both up and down the river. Valerian's great bridge, broken towards the western end, is clearly seen in the south, while to the north the offtake of the Ab-i-Gerger is backed by the mountains out of which the Karun emerges, seemingly thankful after its tempestuous career in the hills to stretch itself placidly on the easy mud of the plains. From the walls of the fort my guide takes me down to the water's edge and we skirt the continuation of the bluff in the direction of the bridge. For absolute curiousness this deserted part of Shushter would be hard to rival. The overhanging sandstone cliff, about fifty feet high, is carved into shelves that are supported by pillars left unhewn by the masons. Great chambers extend far back into the hill, some of them with smaller caves leading off by means of well-cut doorways. Windows there are too, and niches for holding things and mangers for horses and cupboards for housewives. Evidently space was precious here once, for in some places a section between the shelves has been built up with sides and front. Here and there the artificial work has disappeared, leaving an interior open to the day, in that garish manner fires and earthquakes have of dealing with human residences. In one place a long tunnel disappears into the cliff, its sides overlooked by galleries. This is the Ab-i-Khurd, an underground canal that used to serve the double purpose of providing an internal supply of water for the fort, and of irrigating the fields in the south of



the town. Houses situated over its subterranean course also drew their water from it by means of wells. The great bridge, with its embankment which raised the level of the river, being now broken, water no longer flows along this useful canal, to the great inconvenience of a part of the town, and to the ruin of the cultivation which it used to water. How much of the extraordinary cutting in the face of the bluff is due to the action of the water, and how much to human hands, would be difficult to say; it is at least obvious that the cliff was once largely inhabited, though now deserted and given over to the owl and the jackal.

The people of Shushter are about as queer as their town. They claim to be pure Persian, but in reality they are as much Arab as Persian. They are a type by themselves, dress in a manner peculiarly their own, and have customs that distinguish them from both Persian and Arab. The town has the reputation of being the most fanatical in Persia. Some years ago Messrs Lynch's agent had a very unfortunate experience, being attacked by his own servant while in bed. One arm was cut off altogether by a sword, while his face was slashed across from forehead to chin. Not a soul in the town would help the unhappy man, despite which he managed to get down to the steamer, whence he reached Ahwaz, Mohammerah, and eventually Bussorah and medical attention, an exhibition of fortitude under suffering that would be hard to rival. Except for one incident, due to the excitement prevalent on the critical day in Mohurrem, however, I have no complaint against the people or even against the children, whose impudence in outlying Persian towns is usually indicative of the attitude of the inhabitants towards

unbelievers. Among themselves the people of Shushter, as likewise those of Dizful, forty miles to the north, are always at war. The town is divided into quarters occupied by different factions in perpetual feud with each other. The slightest cause sets the town in a blaze, when street-fighting lasts for days. Two months before my arrival there had been a serious outbreak, when seven were killed and about twenty wounded. The Shah appears always to have been powerless to prevent these outbursts of lawlessness, and in the present condition of the country the new Government is not likely to have more control. My friend the mullah, already mentioned, brought the Member of Parliament for Dizful and Shushter to call upon me. It appears that "his Excellency" was ready to start, but that the patriotism of his constituents would not stand the strain of his travelling expenses to Teheran.

Word having reached us that the *Shushan* had arrived, Solomon suggested a *kelek* for getting down to her with my baggage, and remembering happy hours on the Tigris on a craft of this sort, I gladly acquiesced. Next morning, therefore, I found myself bestowed on a frail raft of skins, and afloat on the Ab-i-Gerger not far below the remarkable hollow into which the mill-streams plunge. We soon cast off, and were immediately swirled away by the current and turned round and round several times in a whirlpool before getting properly under way. The turbid stream on which we floated was racing down a narrow defile, on one side of which, high up above us, were ranged the tall masonry dwellings of old Shushter, like a row of mediæval castles. At the water's edge were red- and blue-clad women crouching over their washing, children dabbling their legs in the



still places, and dark-visaged faces of squatting men glowering at us from unshapely heaps of clothes. Hardly had we realised this fantastic old-world picture than the water hurried us away from it, as if it were not good that profane eyes should dwell too long on a bit of the real Asia thus caught unawares. In seeming utterly untouched by the outside world, Shushter remains as it was hundreds of years ago, except that once it was prosperous while to-day it languishes. There is nothing of the West about the houses or the streets, nor do any of its inhabitants affect any but their own old-fashioned garments. The one Armenian from Isfahan, my friend Solomon, is the only representative of civilisation, and he, poor fellow, sometimes cannot put his nose outside his own door for fear that it will be shot off. The Shushteri expresses emotion by filling the streets with flying lead, and when the thirst for noise and breakage comes over him, the rest of mankind must stay at home until his mood changes. This just suits Shushter, for the ideal of its people is to do absolutely nothing but bask in the sun in the cold weather, and sleep in underground chambers in the hot. Anything serves as an excuse to make a holiday within a holiday that is already almost perpetual. Shushter vanished, the defile rapidly dwindled until the river emerged upon the open plain. From the fine rush that characterised our progress in the earlier part of the voyage the speed of the *kelek* died away to a sluggardly crawl, upon which work with the clumsy paddles produced no effect. The banks were completely monotonous, and the sun blazed down upon our unprotected heads. After four hours of this weariness we hove in sight of the *Shushan*, and were very thankful to get aboard of her, and out of the heat and glare. This little



vessel is the successor of that *Susa* which Curzon writes so contemptuously of in his chapter on the Karun river. The erstwhile captain of the *Susa*, who to this day boasts that Curzon beat him with a stick, is now first officer and chief engineer of the *Shushan*. By nationality he is a Turk, of a very conscientious and painstaking disposition. When master of the *Susa* he combined this office with that of sole engineer, and it is reported of him that, when he wished to start or stop his vessel, he usually first rang the orders down the telegraph on the bridge, and then skipped below and executed them himself.

The voyage down to Ahwaz is not particularly interesting except in so far as it illustrates the extraordinary richness of the country and the thinness of the population. Practically all the way down, a distance of fifty miles direct, but some one hundred miles following the winding of the stream, the soil is pure alluvium of the most fertile kind. But in all this distance there are only three or four villages and a few scattered encampments. All the people, settled and nomad, are Arabs—Persians, curiously enough, being conspicuously absent. There is abundance of evidence, however, to show that in ancient times things were very different. At one point the river has cut deep into its bank and displayed on the earthen cliff the remains of an ancient town of considerable extent. In every direction are to be seen the mounds that indicate towns and villages of past times. One could hardly imagine a richer field for the archæologist, for although history informs us that this region was thickly inhabited barely a thousand years ago, below the remains of comparatively recent civilisations must exist those of times contemporary with, if not anterior to, those of Babylon

and Chaldea. Half-way down we halt for the night, and take in wood for the engines at a village which appears to exist only for the purpose of providing a regular supply. A walk of a mile brings us to the junction of the Ab-i-Gerger, upon which we have been sailing, the Karun proper, that has flowed more or less parallel to us from Shushter, and the Ab-i-Diz, another considerable stream issuing from Luristan and passing Dizful. The three joined together really for the first time form what is called the Karun river, the stream marked by that name on maps being known above this point by a variety of local names. The Karun itself is not navigable so close to Shushter as the Ab-i-Gerger, while the Ab-i-Diz, though navigable at high water nearly to Dizful, is usually very difficult. What strikes one is that these three streams constitute a magnificent water-supply, of which, apparently, not the slightest use whatever is made for the purposes of irrigation.

The following morning we cast off at daylight, and entering the greater Karun, now a really fine river, broad and deep, past banks thickly covered with low jungle, steam down to Ahwaz. Here, owing to the rapids, we are forced to disembark and to take another boat. The junction is effected by a tramway about three miles long, the property of the notorious Moin-ut-Tajar, who, hearing that Lynch's contemplated such a scheme for the connection of the steamers on the upper and lower Karun, immediately ran off to the Shah and got a concession for construction of the same. Fortunately this astute gentleman has not been able to do exactly as he likes, for whenever he has put transit rates between the two streams too high, the nimble muleteer steps in and restores prices by competition. Rates are now, however, fixed at a



figure much higher than they might be if the concern had been in proper hands. At Ahwaz I was saved from stranding by Mr Wilson, Lynch's agent, who took me in and looked after me royally. On the top of his house, for the first time in my life, I looked through an astronomical telescope, one of the most enchanting experiences that a sinner can have in this world. Mr Wilson is remarkable for one other thing, for he has a gazelle head, the horns of which measure  $16\frac{1}{2}$  inches, which I take to be a full inch over the record, while the number of distinctly marked notches, so far as I remember, is nearly 30. Thanks to my host, I was able to get away from Ahwaz before the arrival of the regular river-boat, and in the *Ishtar*, a very fast twin-screw launch, made a quick voyage down to Mohammerah, where we arrived on 20th January, exactly a month after leaving Teheran.

The opening in 1901 of the Bakhtiari road as a trade route between the Persian Gulf and Central Persia was expected to lead to an extraordinary development of traffic upon the Karun, but these hopes have been greatly disappointed by the experience of the years which have since elapsed. As an artery for commerce with the interior, the new route, as compared with that from the Gulf *viâ* Shiraz, offers the advantages of shorter distances and cheaper transport rates, while the disadvantage of trans-shipment at Mohammerah from ocean steamers to the river-boats in the Karun is counterbalanced by the shipping difficulties at Bushire. When it is realised that the difference in cost of through transport to Isfahan in normal times amounts to nearly £3 per ton, it becomes obvious that the comparative unpopularity of the route is due to special causes. To the traveller upon the road these are easily discernible, and one can only

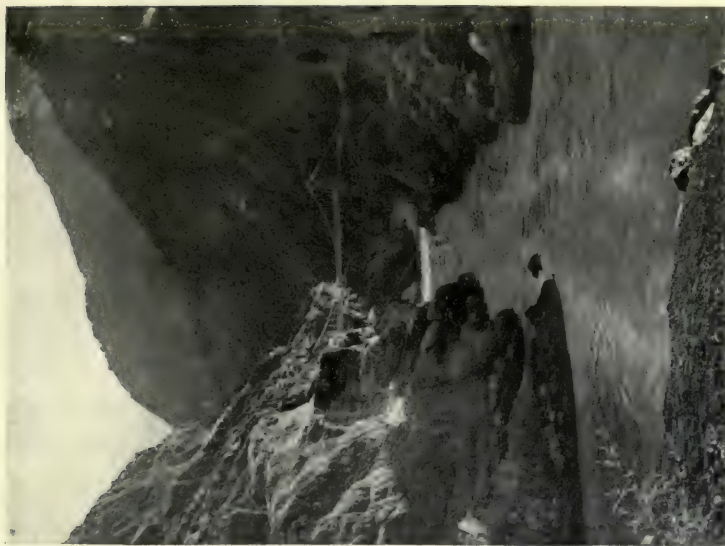


observe that their existence illustrates yet again the extraordinary impracticability of the mind of the Oriental, and his astonishing faculty for cutting off his nose to spite his face. It is instructive of things Persian to examine the situation.

The firm of Lynch Brothers undertook the improvement of the existing track and the construction of three bridges at an estimated cost of £5500. Unfortunately £8500 was spent on the work, although only two of the bridges were built. Lynch's asked for acknowledgment of the extra £3000, but the Bakhtiari countered with a demand for reduction on account of the unconstructed bridge. Lynch's figure of £5500 had been only an estimate, not a contract price, so the extra charge was not unreasonable, particularly as it would appear that the additional cost was largely due to the Bakhtiari failure to assist with labour and material at cheap rates, according to agreement. At the same time Lynch's, knowing themselves to be dealing with Orientals, ought to have been extremely careful about exceeding the estimated expenditure. As it was, the Bakhtiari regarded the additional cost as an imposition and utterly refused to acknowledge it. The matter being referred to the Legation, it was decided that Lynch's could not demand the extra £3000, while as regards the unconstructed bridge the Bakhtiari themselves built it, and the British Government paid the cost, some £800. The latter part of the decision was probably due to the feeling that Lynch's had been unfortunate as regards their claim, while political expediency suggested the appeasement of the Bakhtiari by the present of the bridge,—this took place in 1904, before there was any idea of an Anglo-Russian *rapprochement*.

Other points were in hot dispute. The arrangement

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*The Lynch Bridges in the Bakhtiari Mountains.*

70 1881  
ALPHABETICAL



was that the capital expenditure in connection with the route was to be repayable in twenty-five annual instalments with interest at 6 per cent. The Bakhtiariis having fallen behind with the instalments, Lynch's put in an account which included interest on arrears; they also included charges for repair of bridges and other minor items. All of these the Bakhtiariis declined to admit. Eventually, however, they paid up the arrears and certain of the charges, but it is understood that Lynch's still press the British Government to support their claim for £3000 additional cost, and for the interest on arrears. Within the last year or two the Bakhtiariis vigorously protested against paying the expenses of an engineer to inspect the bridges, and for the cost of painting them, treatment which is essential for the preservation of the ironwork from corrosion. All questions between the Bakhtiariis and Lynch's have remained in abeyance of late owing to the former being occupied with politics. With the return to Persia of Sirdar Assad, and the adoption of liberal ideas by the Bakhtiariis, it is fully expected that petty differences will disappear and that relations henceforth will be more satisfactory. The Nationalist movement in Persia has an ardent supporter in Mr H. F. B. Lynch, lately the member for Ripon, and it would certainly be ungracious of the Bakhtiariis to continue to suspect the *bonâ fides* of the firm of which he is principal.

As regards the working of the route, the road constructed was not meant to be anything but a mule track, so one never expected to be able to drive a carriage along it. At the same time much of the good work done by Lynch's engineers is rendered useless by deterioration, many parts being extremely difficult even for the nimble mule. Moreover, there are prac-

tically no caravanserais on the road, with the result that muleteers have to put up with considerable hardships, while merchandise is liable to damage from rain for lack of protection. Further, muleteers, though the goods carried are guaranteed against robbery, are continually being squeezed in a small way by wandering tribesmen, who ask them for their tea and bread and tobacco in a masterful manner that is not to be denied. Complaints meet with no redress. But worst of all, from the muleteers' point of view, is the exorbitant prices charged for forage, whenever opportunity offers. The animals must be fed on the road, and only the Bakhtiaris possess supplies. The object of the opening of the Bakhtiari route was to cheapen the transport charges to the interior of Persia, Lynch's to profit by the traffic on the Karun river, the Bakhtiaris by the tolls levied on the goods in transit. But the Bakhtiaris are killing the goose that lays the golden eggs by neglecting to keep their road in repair, by allowing the muleteer to be mulcted, and by failing to provide accommodation by the way, this latter reason accounting to a great extent for the closure of the road for three months in the winter. The one short section where snow is a real difficulty could be kept open by a little expenditure. The principal cause of the cessation of traffic is the hardships which the muleteer finds confronting him owing to the necessity of camping in the open in the depth of winter. Despite all the drawbacks, however, the natural advantages of the route are so great that the tolls have slowly increased until in 1908 they yielded a revenue of over £1000. Owing to the blocking of the Bushire route, trade along the Bakhtiari road in 1909 was materially increased, and if the Bakhtiaris were clever, they would set themselves to retain the temporary advantage by

offering greater inducements to the muleteers. As it is, mule-hire is ridiculously high because so few muleteers care to work on the route. Let the Bakhtiaris spend some of their income on repairs, on provision of forage at fixed rates, and on accommodation, and their revenue from tolls will advance by leaps and bounds. In this case, as in so many others in Persia, one can see how European supervision of the arrangements would have an immediate effect upon the prospects of the route, and certainly realise for it the success predicted at its inauguration. But the jealousy and suspicion of foreigners, so conspicuous in Teheran, is no less prevalent among the Bakhtiaris than among their more sophisticated fellow-countrymen in the north, and they are no more likely to entertain the idea of European management than they are to migrate to the South Pole.



## CHAPTER XVII.

## THE PERSIAN GULF.

EVERYBODY knows that if you go to the top of the Persian Gulf and sail up the Shat-el-Arab for four hours, you will come to the insalubrious port of Mohammerah. The great Mesopotamian river, in its course to the sea, is in its lower latitudes gradually approached by the Karun, coming from the Persian mountains, and at Mohammerah the two join. Most authorities have proved to their own satisfaction that the Karun used to flow into the Persian Gulf on its own account, along the channel now known as the Bahmishir. They attribute the joining to an ancient worthy who dug a canal between the two that boat traffic from one river to the other might be saved the long voyage round by the sea. And they believe that the Karun took a fancy to the new opening, and henceforward sought blue water by way of the canal and the Shat-el-Arab, thereby deserting its old bed.

Sir William Willcocks, however, has laid all these ingenious theorists low by declaring that the Bahmishir is merely an old irrigation channel, and that the present course of the Karun is purely natural. He goes further, and expresses the conviction that the Shat-el-Arab once used to flow into the Gulf by what





*A House at Shushter.*



*A Creek at Mohammerah.*



is known as the Zobeir channel, thirty miles to the west, and that the present bed of the Shat-el-Arab, below Mohammerah, is in reality the original bed of the Karun. It seems a great pity, when a nice working hypothesis has been established, that anybody should come along and destroy it, whether out of pure pleasure or in the interests of Truth. Sir William, however, is full of the iconoclastic spirit—has he not relocated Eden and brought Ararat from Armenia to Mesopotamia?—and no respecter of comfortable misconceptions. As for that short section of the present course of the Karun river, a bare two miles long, I can offer no opinion of my own. But I do know from personal observation that the town of Mohammerah is pleasantly placed on the reach in question, whether it be the handiwork of man or the gift of Nature.

One may truly say pleasantly, so far as looks are concerned. Steamers passing on the Shat-el-Arab nowadays almost invariably drop anchor off the entrance to the Karun and afford the passenger a view of Mohammerah stretched along the northern bank, its many windowed and verandahed houses embowered in palms. Many a traveller bound elsewhere has wished for a run up the Karun and a closer look at the town mysteriously hiding itself behind date groves. But very few have been able to gratify the wish, for though the steamers stop they seldom stay more than an hour or two. In my case, however, the desire experienced during a former passing was satisfied; and more, for this time I dwelt a long week in Mohammerah, and left it the poorer of another illusion—what a blessed provision of the Creator it is that the human mind acquires new ones as fast as the old ones fall away. Frankly, Mohammerah is a poisonous place from the residential point of view, and

the people who live in it do so out of pure heroism. The European residents—to whom alone the place is objectionable, natives regarding it as a blessed blend between Paris and Paradise—are very few in number, and entirely without amusement. There is no club, and not even a tennis-court, the latter institution being absent on account of a local belief that it is irreligious to mark the ground with straight lines—piety like this is seldom found outside the country where it is a sin to whistle on the Sabbath. Despite the monotony of existence, however, I managed to spend a very instructive week in Mohammerah, thanks to a host keenly interested in local problems who spared no trouble to enlighten me thereupon.

The date-palm is the most obvious thing in the town. One knows this tree to be both graceful and elegant, but it is surprising to learn that there is romance in its life. Know then, gentle reader, that the date is male and female, that the different sexes are properly married, that the wives bring forth the fruit and that the husbands are never faithless. There is polygamy, to be sure, but no divorce owing to the high code of morality. A date farmer plants twelve girls and one boy all together, and five years later the nuptials take place. The process entails the artificial fertilising of the female trees with the seed of the male. Without this assistance the females would be dependent upon chance seed blown by the wind or dropped by birds. Left to themselves trees speedily deteriorate in fruit-bearing capacity, and in a state of nature the fruit is worthless. Altogether the date is an interesting tree. It is said to flourish when its feet are in water and its head in hell. There are scores of varieties of dates, but all need moisture and great heat. To see an Arab climb a date-tree is a lesson in dynamics. The climber



hoops himself to the tree, so loosely that when his toes are against the trunk his body leans away from it at an angle of about 45 degrees. Jerking himself towards the tree the hoop slackens, and is slipped up the trunk, an upward step completing the movement and restoring the original position. In this manner the Arab walks up a lofty tree as easily and as fast as he walks on the level road. Mohammerah is streaked with small canals, perhaps fifteen feet wide and six deep. A section of date trunk makes an excellent bridge for the barefooted, horny-soled native, but a precarious path for the slippery-booted European, particularly in view of the mud below. The Arab, in some parts of the Gulf, it might be mentioned, is extremely economical, and having eaten the dates himself, gives the stones to his cattle. Fortunately for the cattle the stones are ground into powder first.

One of the principal drawbacks to existence in Mohammerah is the difficulty of procuring supplies. The chickens are of the hardy order, and the potatoes come from Isfahan, a three hundred mile journey by mule or camel. The local rice is of inferior quality, while vegetables are scarcer than fine gold. The river is full of fish, but the Arab fisherman is empty of the energy that might furnish a regular supply. Tinned food ordered from Bombay arrives in the fulness of time but cannot be procured locally. Floral decorations are not among the requirements of the native inhabitants, and when a few daisies were used to brighten the table at a dinner party to which I was bidden, the guests all exclaimed, "Oh! where did you get the flowers?"

Telegraphic communication is a real difficulty. The wire runs up country to Ahwaz, and from there south-eastward to Bebehan, in the Kuhgelu country, and



thence to Shiraz, where it joins the lines of the Indo-European Telegraphic Department. When the Kuhgelus are not engaged in shooting Russian and British consuls, they spend their time potting the white insulators on the telegraph poles. They frequently employ a quarter of a mile of the wire for their own purposes, and when repairing parties come out from Shiraz to mend the gap, the Kuhgelus rob, strip, and beat its members. This happened more than once while I was at Teheran. European telegraph officers have been murdered by the Kuhgelus, who are among the sauciest of the Persian tribes. But as regards Mohammerah, telegraphic communication, in these circumstances, is necessarily precarious, and the usual method of sending a message is by boat to the Turkish wires at Bussorah, or by steamer to the Indo-European Department cables at Fao or Bushire. It might have been thought that telegraphing to Ahwaz, at least, was a simple business, but in this respect exists a complication unusual in the East. The Mohammerah wire is Persian, and the officer in charge is stated to be defunct, though he still draws the pay of the post. The work is said to be done by his daughter (who presumably draws the pay), who, if this be true, possesses the distinction of being the only female telegraph operator in the whole of the Orient. The lady is engaged to be married to the operator in Ahwaz, whom she is supposed never to have seen, but whom she has captivated by her mastery of the Morse code. While I was at Mohammerah there was no telegraph communication with Ahwaz, and the popular explanation was that there had been a lovers' quarrel, in consequence of which the Mohammerah end would have nothing to do with Ahwaz. This eminently human reason quite satisfied Mohammerah,



*Mohammerah.*



*The Persian Telegraph Line between Ahwaz and Mohammerah.*

75 1911  
ANNOUNCED



which patiently awaited the resumption of friendly relations to send off its telegrams.

The last twenty years has seen an extraordinary development in the trade of Mohammerah. Where exports and imports were almost nothing, the figures are now practically half a million sterling, a result due entirely to the opening of the Karun river and the institution of the Bakhtiari trade route to Central Persia, both primarily owing to the enterprise of the Lynch firm. Of the present imports, cotton from India and the United Kingdom and sugar from France represent 80 per cent of the total. German imports for 1908-9 were only £6300 out of a total of £260,000. Exports are extraordinarily variable, owing to the unreliability of the wheat crop. A remarkable feature of the trade of the present year, complete figures for which are not yet available, is the large quantity of opium coming down the Bakhtiari road from Isfahan. High prices consequent on the restriction in cultivation in India and China have given a tremendous fillip to the demand for the Persian article, and the total export for the year is expected to run into six figures. Curiously enough it is all shipped to England, and from thence backward to the Far East. Meanwhile the town of Mohammerah has been rapidly increasing, and the population is now estimated at 10,000, with every prospect of being doubled within the next few years. The disorders in southern Persia have led to large temporary increase in the through trade to Central Persia, and this, together with the establishment of the managing agents of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company at Mohammerah, and the importation of machinery for drilling and refining, and of material for the construction of the pipe line, has led to very optimistic and apparently well-grounded hopes of remarkable

development in the near future. The Imperial Bank of Persia has just opened a branch, and a French merchant from Bushire is setting up a store for the sale of European goods. Both enterprises are likely to meet with early success. All the land belongs to the Sheikh, who seems rather inclined to demand fancy prices for building sites. To starve the gosling before it is old enough to lay the golden eggs does not seem good policy, and the Sheikh will be well advised in his own interests to do everything to encourage the establishment and growth of business, assured that success will bring him ample reward in a hundred indirect ways.

Mohammerah and the country of the Sheikh is included in the Persian Governorship of Arabistan, a province somewhat ill-defined both politically and geographically. Roughly speaking, it includes all of the plain south and west of the Persian mountains as far as the Turkish boundary, a hazy line running northward from the neighbourhood of Mohammerah towards the Pusht-i-Kuh. The Sheikh is independent of the Governor from Teheran, and usually keeps that gentleman in his pocket. Indeed, the Persian official can do nothing with his province without the assistance of the Sheikh, who can bring large military forces into the field, while the Governor has nobody to enforce his will. The Persian Government recognises the special position of the Sheikh, and does not interfere with the internal affairs of the tribes owing him allegiance. The Sheikh on his side admits his liability to certain taxation, which he remits in a lump sum to Teheran, and accepts Persian Customs, Posts, and Telegraphs. His relations with the Indian Government are usually very satisfactory, the Sheikh finding British friendli-



ness a convenient offset to the jealousy with which his position is viewed in Teheran.

I had the pleasure of a long conversation with him while I was at Mohammerah, and was interested to find him a man of intelligent mind, keenly alive to the political developments of the day relating to this part of the world. By opportunely lending money to Sirdar Assad on first-class security he has given substantial aid to the Constitutional cause in Persia, and ranks himself as one of its firm supporters, despite his entrance into a compact to be mentioned in the next chapter. He is at the same time critical of the attitude of the present Government towards the questions of finance and of foreign assistance in the reorganisation of the administration. He thinks it reasonable that the expenditure of money lent by the Powers should be subject to foreign control, and regards European assistance as essential to the progress of reform. The province is entitled to send representatives to the Mejliis, but the member for Dizful and Shushter has not yet started, for reasons already mentioned, while that for Mohammerah has not yet been elected. The people here, in fact, seem to regard the Parliament as a kind of joke that concerns Teheran primarily, the rest of Persia very little, and Arabistan not at all. Enmity between the Arabs and the Bakhtiari is of long standing, and though the chiefs on both sides are excellent friends, local opinion is quite out of sympathy with a movement in which the Bakhtiari have taken so prominent a part. An exception might be made in the case of the two towns mentioned, for their inhabitants claim to be pure Persians—which they assuredly are not—and as such show a tendency to be interested in Persian



politics. Their election of a deputy to Parliament certainly argues interest, though their failure to find a trifle for his travelling expenses suggests lukewarmness.

From Mohammerah I took ship to Bushire, the metropolis of the Persian Gulf, in that British interests in these regions are here focussed in the person of the Political Resident. Unfortunately for me Colonel Cox was in England, and the pleasure of renewing an acquaintance with him made only a short time before in Teheran was denied me. The problems of which Bushire is the centre, however, stare one in the face, and one realises here, on the spot, more substantially than in the distant north, how curious it is that what Britain strives with her right hand to do in the Persian Gulf her left hand continually endeavours to undo. There is surely in our history few more honourable chapters than that which deals with our connection with the Persian Gulf. We fought for predominance there, and gained it; we drove piracy out of existence, and have since policed the Gulf; we have surveyed it, mapped it, and lighted it; we have shown our teeth at one time or another to most of the kinglets on its shores, and generally thereafter taken them under our protection. And always, until within the last few years, we have had a monopoly of the trade. If ever there was a region where it would seem British wishes ought to be law it is the Persian Gulf.

How very different is the real situation. It is a joke throughout the whole of the Gulf that the gun-running, against which we have always protested, is carried on under our noses. The majority of the rifles smuggled are manufactured in Birmingham, while practically every one of them is brought to Mascat in British steamers. And now, when we can stand it

no longer, and we have employed warships and troops to stop it, the situation as regards the origin of the rifles, their transit and their distributing centre, remains unchanged. We have not put a stopper on the exportation from England, nor have we debarred British ships from engaging in the trade; while in Mascat our naval officers lunch with our Political Agent, and watch from his windows the trans-shipment of rifles that at tea-time they will be hunting on the high seas. Comedy could go no farther. We are restrained from action in Mascat, of course, by the existence of the French and American treaties with that little principality. In high politics it is very necessary to regard as sacrosanct the solemn undertakings of great contracting parties. There appears recently to have been a slight violation of this laudable creed in the case of the Berlin Treaty, but that lapse from virtue has since been condoned. Gulf politicians, however, know very little of high politics. To all appearances Great Britain is complete mistress of the Arabian Sea and its offshoots, and should be able to do exactly what she likes in these regions. But instead of washing the whole business of gun-running out of existence, she takes the cumbrous and expensive method of trying to stop it in the middle instead of at the source—laborious baling of the boat instead of expeditious mending of the leak. Failure to compass an end in view is in the East always attributable to weakness. For the moment we have diminished the gun-running, but it is much too profitable a trade to be stopped so easily, and its resumption in the immediate future, cunningly planned and highly organised, is a dead certainty. Until the leak itself is dealt with there will be no stopping this dangerous and ominous



traffic in modern weapons; the marvel to local on-lookers is that we appear to shirk the only effective method of dealing with it.

So much for one side of the water. On the other, the condition of southern Persia, due to our toleration, is a cause of continual astonishment to the Gulf politician. In one way our prestige in the Gulf is very great. The high character of our official representatives and their dignified conduct of affairs are fully recognised and appreciated by the natives. In commerce the Englishman's word is as good as his bond. And there are always our armed ships to give reality to the situation. In curious contrast to this aspect of the situation is an event which happened near Bushire last July. It will be remembered that, in consequence of the threatened invasion of Shiraz by a horde of Kashghais, it was decided to reinforce the consular guard there for the protection of British subjects and foreigners in general. It appears that the question of sending sufficient numbers really to enforce respect, and to withstand a siege if necessary, was under discussion, but that on the score of expense it was settled that a smaller number would suffice. An organised attack on Europeans was not anticipated, and it was assumed that the smaller number would be sufficient to guard against petty annoyance.

Nevertheless, the smallness of the reinforcement led to a regrettable incident. From the small Residency escort of Indian sepoy at Bushire about thirty were taken, besides a Maxim gun detachment of bluejackets from the warship lying in the harbour. With two British officers the whole party numbered only forty, so far as I recollect. They moved from Bushire very early one morning in the desperate heat of the Persian Gulf summer. The first stage ended in the forenoon



at a village about sixteen miles inland, where there is a large caravanserai belonging to the local chief. Necessarily the little expedition arrived in rather a sorry condition, the officers keen to get their men under substantial cover against the midday sun. But instead of finding the caravanserai gate wide open, and the proprietor waiting to receive them with open arms, that worthy and his retainers had shut the door, and were lining the walls to the number of several hundreds, armed to the teeth and evidently far from bent on hospitality. Clearly the shelter of the caravanserai was not to be gained without a scrimmage, and as fighting on the way was no part of the mission entrusted to the officer in command, he was compelled to accept the situation and to order his party to camp. The erection of tents in the heat, and resting in them all day with such feeble protection from the burning sun, was extremely disagreeable, and when two of the sepoys shortly afterwards died of heat-stroke, there is little doubt that the trying experience of the first day contributed to this deplorable result. The loss of life was bad enough, but what are we to think of so deadly an insult to the British flag? News of an incident of this kind spreads like wildfire, and the snub administered to the foreigner was doubtless immediately known throughout the Gulf, and all over the south of Persia. It would be interesting to know in what degree subsequent outrages on Europeans in these regions have been a consequence of the cavalier treatment described above. Mere travellers are likely to be treated with scant respect when a party of soldiers can be insulted with impunity,—as far as I am aware the village chief who behaved so impudently has never been brought to book for his behaviour.

The condition of the south of Persia cannot be better

illustrated than by a recital of the wrongs of the port of Bushire. An export and import trade that in 1907-8 exceeded £1,500,000 in value had dwindled in 1908-9 to £1,200,000; and, to judge by the returns already to hand, the total for 1909-10 will probably amount to no more than half that for 1907-8. Bad as the situation is, there is every prospect that it will become worse in the future. The complete inability of the Government to punish the brigands who attacked the Russian Consular party in November, or those who killed two of the sowars escorting a British consul in the following April, has satisfied the disorderly tribesmen that they have nothing to fear either from Teheran or from the capital of the province which they haunt. Where they were content to pilfer they now indulge in wholesale robbery. The consequence is that, while throughout the disturbed period of the last three years trade has been merely diminishing owing to the losses suffered by caravans, it has now ceased altogether, for the robbers take everything—merchandise, mules, even the muleteers' clothes, leaving the unfortunate wretches to die naked in the bitter winter cold of the mountains. During the few weeks previous to my visit to Bushire no transport animals at all had come into Bushire, though in normal times they arrive at the rate of hundreds per day. The *rah-i-Shah* (royal road) to the north is completely deserted but for the rascals who bestride it between Bushire and Shiraz. In these circumstances it is but natural that exports from Bushire have dwindled away to nothing, while imports must cease altogether when goods now on order have been delivered. Fresh purchases are useless, for the port is already encumbered with accumulations amounting to thousands of tons.



How British and Indian commerce is affected by these conditions is plainly indicated by the following import figures:—

Year.	Cotton.	Tea.
1907-8 . . . .	70,664 cwt.	16,656 cwt.
1908-9 . . . .	49,926 "	13,670 "
Six months of 1909 . .	13,874 "	3,279 "

The figures for other goods show corresponding decreases. Bar silver, once a heavy import, has now disappeared from the statistics owing to the gradually increasing insecurity of this route to Teheran during the last six years. War rates, which are, of course, prohibitive, are now charged for insurance on goods in transit to the north. The European firms cannot afford to insure, and although the Persian Government is supposed to be responsible for foreign-owned merchandise robbed on the recognised trade routes, claims on this account to the extent of tens of thousands of pounds are still unsatisfied, and are likely to remain so. The merchants of Shiraz have recently entered into a compact with Sowlat-i-Dowleh, Ilkhani of the Kashgais, whereby that chieftain guarantees the safety of merchandise despatched by a roundabout route from the coast to Shiraz, against a small fee for each load. British merchants cannot avail themselves of this arrangement, for the insurance companies will have nothing to do with any but the regular routes; the Persian Government declines responsibility on the same account; while in case of loss it would be easier to obtain compensation from the man in the moon than from the Sowlat. By guaranteeing one route the Sowlat implies the right to make any other route a hunting-ground for his braves. It may be interjected,



too, that by commercial treaties with Persia internal imposts on trade are illegal. A sugar famine in Shiraz has raised the price so high that fancy rates are being paid for transport. Ordinary rates for carriage between Bushire and Shiraz—180 miles by road, only 110 direct—are about £4 per ton, but muleteers now demand £15, and in view of the risks they run it is a wonder they do not want £150. The unfortunate Bushire merchant has large quantities of sugar ready for despatch to the scene of shortage, but robbery is a certainty on the *rah-i-Shah*, and on the road guaranteed by the Sowlat there are no caravanserais, and hence no protection for the sugar, which will surely melt in the rain, or otherwise suffer damage from the weather.

The tale of the sorrows of the British merchant in Bushire is far from ended; for, in addition to those consequent upon the present condition of disorder, there are others of a permanent kind. One grievance is very old, and has now become greatly aggravated by the state of the trade route. A Persian merchant finds himself in difficulties and immediately divests himself of all his property. His European creditor institutes bankruptcy proceedings, or rather their farcical equivalent in this country, and is told that the debtor has no means to pay. A proper court could examine books and witnesses with the object of elucidating the position of the bankrupt. The Persian courts, however, are hopelessly inefficient, and incorrigibly corrupt into the bargain. If a bare denial of the possession of means does not suffice, the debtor bribes the judges.

The difficulty of transport has resulted in large numbers of Persian merchants being unable to take up consignments ordered through British firms. Hence a new crop of bad debts, which cannot be collected

despite endless endeavour on the part of the Consul, whose duty it is to support British claims. A great difficulty is the fact that collateral security in the shape of mortgages on real estate cannot be realised owing to the fact that Persian law forbids a foreigner to hold landed property.

Customs regulations have been a constant source of annoyance and loss, for many of them were framed to hamper trade in the Persian Gulf. Rigid interpretation of senseless rules by the Belgian officials caused great vexation, but of late there is a slight improvement in this respect owing to the action of the Legation in obtaining a few modifications, and, it should be added, to the much more friendly attitude of the Belgians generally towards the British community, consequent on the disappearance of the unfortunate influence of M. Naus.

The shipping difficulties at Bushire are well known. Ships frequently have to lie nine miles from the port owing to the shallowness of the water. Three miles is the nearest an ordinary steamer can get to the shore at favourable tides. Expensive lightering is the consequence, and endless delay owing to the laggardliness of the boatmen. They sometimes combine to force shippers to pay higher rates, and there is on record the occasion when they all took the rudders out of their vessels and deposited them in a mosque with the object of invoking Divine aid in their demands.

An extraordinarily unsatisfactory feature of trade with Persia is the duty upon tea. The rate imposed under the tariff of 1902, thanks to the futility of our diplomacy in Persia at that time, is equivalent to 100 per cent *ad valorem*. This high duty in a tea-drinking country gives rise to incessant smuggling from one end of the Gulf to the other. A preventive force is out of



the question with the small resources at the disposal of the Customs Department, and the consequence is that, since 1902, when a large business was done in tea by British firms, the trade has been gradually passing from their hands into those of smugglers, who find a thousand places on the desert coasts of the south where there is not even the semblance of an attempt to collect duty. Tea-smuggling has this year attained greater dimensions than ever before, and of the total amount imported into Persia, considerably more than half is now estimated to enter duty-free. Yet British firms who have no desire to do business except above board are harassed by Customs formalities in their endeavours to trade legitimately, while the natives who cheat the Government escape altogether.

Meanwhile the British firms which monopolise the trade of Bushire have had to maintain full establishments and the usual expenses, whereas they have only done half the usual business, and made only half, or less, the usual profit. Nowhere in the East is the struggle for existence by foreign traders harder than in the Persian Gulf, and a diminution in the volume of trade, such as here described, constitutes a serious blow to our commercial position. Of recent years German traders have been established at various points in the Persian Gulf, while a German steamship line maintains a regular service of boats. It is a well-known and indisputable fact that business is done by the Germans at a loss, for they both buy and sell at prices which other merchants know to be unprofitable. Their steamers are also run at a heavy loss. To trade at a loss in order to establish business connections is a well-known and perfectly legitimate form of commercial enterprise. One cannot exactly wish the Germans luck, though one can admire their



pluck in fighting an uphill battle. The point of this reference is, that while there are outsiders willing to incur expenditure to obtain a footing in what has hitherto been a British sphere, any weakening of British firms in that market simply doubles the opportunities of the outsiders. Not only, then, is the British merchant in Bushire individually a loser by the present condition of affairs, but there is the risk that business will tend to pass out of our hands altogether if his losses continue.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## ENGLAND AND RUSSIA IN PERSIA.

HAVING dealt with the situation at length in the preceding pages, it now behoves me to attempt something in the nature of an appreciation of Anglo-Russian policy in regard to Persia. To do so effectively it is necessary to gather up the various threads which have run through my narrative of events and to present them to the reader in more or less woven form. There is, moreover, a slight hiatus to be filled up, for, having left Persia in January in order to prosecute my journey in Turkey, there remain six months of the doings of the new Government to be accounted for.

I have endeavoured to establish the view that the Constitutional movement in Persia was of sudden and artificial growth, and I do not believe that any European observer conversant with the situation will be disposed to dispute it. Where I may find myself at issue with friends of Persia will be in my estimation of the depth of the soil in which the growth took place. It cannot be denied that the constitutional idea was born in the grounds of the British Legation at Teheran, but it may be claimed that the Persian mind, by reason of long suffering and abasement, was

in a condition of extraordinary receptivity, and ready to seize with avidity any suggestion which promised for the country escape from the thralldom in which it was held. The religious movements that have stirred Persia during the last fifty years certainly imply a desire for better things among a considerable section of the inhabitants. But, as far as I am aware, these stirrings have taken a spiritual rather than a temporal direction, and it has not been suggested, for instance, that the adherents of Bahism have identified themselves with the Constitutional movement in their capacity as Bahis. Dissatisfaction with the Government was certainly strong in Teheran in the summer of 1906, though not manifest throughout the country. But according to the records things have always been so in Persia, and the situation that existed then was indeed more or less chronic. Certainly no Press news, nor official despatches, nor other records relating to the time, suggest any unwonted movement either at the capital or throughout the country. The only new element in the situation at all was the Young Persian; but, as I have already stated, even he never lifted up his voice against the system of government or against the ruination that was being brought upon the country. It is, indeed, indisputable that the disturbances which culminated in the great *bast* in the British Legation were engineered by the clerics of the capital in protest against the assumption of their privileges by the Grand Vizier of the day, Ain-ed-Dowleh, my hero of the £1000 draft. And so, in admitting a considerable degree of enthusiasm for reform subsequent to the appearance of the constitutional idea, it must not be forgotten that the zeal was of the sudden kind, engendered much more by favourable circumstances than by that irrepressible fever for liberty and for



reformation which has been the mainspring of revolution elsewhere in the world.

Zeal usually accomplishes something, whatever the disabilities under which it labours. The first Mejliss, however, accomplished extremely little, partly because it was greatly obstructed, but principally, I maintain, because it was not based on a solid foundation. If the right to a representative institution had been wrested from the ruling power by a movement backed by forceful spirits with clear aims and a sincere desire for reform, it is inconceivable that some practical result would not have ensued. The pitiable failure of the Mejliss to achieve anything, or even to gain public sympathy by honest endeavour, was indeed due to the absence of the essential elements of high resolve and fixed determination. Those who really aspired to better things were either so few in number as to be swamped by the interested many, or they so lacked force of character as to be unable to influence the course of events.

Autocracy having triumphed for a time, we see the Constitutional party once more force its way into power. That would seem to disprove the argument that there was little depth in Nationalist aspirations, were it not that the Nationalist success was due to forces set in motion by outside parties. While admitting the sincerity of the Bakhtiari chief whose ambition it was to fill the *rôle* of saviour of his country, it is obvious that the clansmen whom he led were animated by self-interest—were, in fact, from the Nationalist point of view, mercenary. The Sipahdar's claim to immortality as a champion of freedom will be admitted by all parties to be *nil*. The backbone of the force under his command were a few Caucasians who had their own game to play,

and who were mercenary in the strict sense of the word, whereas the Bakhtiariis were at least of Persian nationality. There is, indeed, no overlooking the fact that the resurrection of the Constitutional cause was due to a combined effort on the part of one of the wild tribes of Luristan, of a handful of foreigners, and of a few fiery spirits from Azerbaijan, where the population is impregnated by Turkish blood, and only in the smallest degree to the originators of the Constitutional movement and the Nationalist party that arose therefrom.

Since that resurrection the Nationalists have had another opportunity to prove their quality. But again, according to their own account, they have been hampered by adverse influences, even as they were at their first attempt by the intrigues of the Shah. On this occasion Russia is the culprit, and for all their misfortunes the Persians now blame the Russians. It is not apparent that the Russians have done any single thing to impede Nationalist efforts to reform, except to refuse the loan of money without terms. The Russian troops in the country have absolutely and completely abstained from interference with the administration, and have indeed done great service in the cause of order by their simple presence. Persian thoughts, however, have been so taken up by this bitter infliction that there has been no time to do anything but bewail and impotently rage against it. Here, again, one is impelled to observe that zeal is never entirely defeated, and that if the Persians had really been animated by that high resolve and fixed determination to improve the condition of their country they would have accomplished something in the desired direction, however handicapped.

That brings me to a consideration of the doings of the new Government since I left the country. So



far as has been possible, I have been a diligent student of Persian news, as it appears in the Press, through private correspondence with well-informed persons, and by communication with fresh arrivals from Persia. On all hands the situation is regarded as almost hopeless. Nothing whatever has been accomplished, and the verdict is universal that no progress of any kind towards an amelioration of the situation is possible until Russia and England interfere. A letter to 'The Times,' dated 10th June, expresses the burthen of what reaches me:—

. . . Until some solution [of the financial problem] is found the reorganisation of the Administration and the introduction of reforms must remain in abeyance. But there is a further problem, as the events of the past six months have shown, even more pressing than that of finance. No progress in any direction is possible until a Cabinet is formed composed of men capable not only of inspiring confidence in the country but of working together in harmony with each other and with the Mejliss. The country has been treated since the beginning of the year to the spectacle of repeated resignations and dissensions in the Cabinet, followed by temporary adjustments leading again to new disagreements. The fact, moreover, that purely personal questions have been largely responsible for these dissensions makes it doubly difficult to arrive at a just estimation of the situation as a whole. . . . A Persian Prime Minister feels himself slighted, or has a difference of opinion with some of his colleagues; he resigns; a few days later he resumes office, only to lay it down again the following week; and then a little later he once more grasps the reins of power. Some weeks ago the Sipahdar and Sirdar Assad retired from the Cabinet swearing never to hold office again; but a few days later they presented themselves to the Mejliss in their capacity as Ministers and announced that they had got over the difficulty of their oath by exchanging portfolios. The story goes that only the other day Sirdar Assad invited the Mejliss to invest the Sipahdar and himself with dictatorial powers. There was, of course, an uproar. The next day the Sipahdar denied all knowledge of such a proposal. There is a pathos in such proceedings that suggests irresistibly children playing on the edge of a precipice. If it were possible to detect in the conflict of interests some settled policy or definite programme, some party or even clique, pledged to the attainment of common political objects, the task of a sympathetic critic would be considerably lightened.



As this final chapter on Persian affairs is being written there is fresh news from Teheran. The Government led by Sipahdar and Sirdar Assad has resigned and given place to another, which has immediately declared a programme that, if carried out, would be the saving of the situation. It proposes the reform of the police, improvement in the administration, punishment of disorderly elements, increase of provincial garrisons, reform of courts of justice and of schools, immediate steps to cover the deficit in the Budget, and—employment of foreign advisers. It is a very old programme, thoroughly Persian in its comprehensiveness, and utterly unattainable without the money that is lacking. Even if the money were forthcoming, success would be possible only if the last item of the programme was carried out in such a manner as to insure that the advice of the foreign advisers was followed. Advisers have hitherto in Persia been treated with scant ceremony, and their opinion usually regarded as not worth listening to. There is nothing to suggest that the new Cabinet is more likely to achieve success than its predecessors, for some of its members are as before, while there is always behind it the same ignorant and obstructive Mejliss to make its task difficult. Immediately after the change in the Government there was announced the signing of a document by which the principal Nationalist leaders recorded their intention to abandon all personal aims, to forget past differences, and to assist the Government, the whole sworn to by a solemn oath on the Koran. That was on 5th August. Two days later there was heavy fighting in Teheran, in which Maxims, field-artillery, and siege-guns were employed, and in which 40 of the combatants were killed and wounded and 300 taken prisoners. The leaders on each side were among those

who had subscribed to the above-mentioned document and taken an oath to forget their differences! The Government side was successful, thanks to the energetic action of Ephraim and his police, and the support of the Bakhtiari, one of the chiefs of whom, curiously enough, fought on the opposite side. But the whole affair is instructive of the situation, in that it was regarded as necessary to take oath to forego personal aims, and because two days later the oath was cast to the winds.

A tangible feature of the situation is the increasing divergence between the clerical element and the Nationalists. It has always been in dispute whether or no the idea of Constitutional government conflicts with the tenets of Islam, and I do not venture to express an opinion on the point, except in so far as to observe that where sincerity obtained on both sides compromise on the single important question at issue should not be difficult. Civil and ecclesiastic law under Islam are one, and the only interpreters thereof are the mullahs. One sees no reason why a community constitutionally governed should not be content with justice administered by the clergy, if the *bonâ fides* of the clergy were unquestioned. But that is the difficulty in Persia, for all who are emancipated from old-fashioned notions are convinced that the corrupt and unscrupulous mullahs constitute a hopeless obstacle to progress, and that one of the essentials of the situation is the establishment of regular courts of justice independent of the clergy. It has been seen that the mullahs were really the instigators of the movement that unexpectedly resulted in the granting of a Constitution. These worthy people thereafter were ardent supporters of the new development, because they hoped to employ it to their own advantage. Some seventy



mullahs sat in the first Mejliś, but in the second there are very few, and their influence in its counsels is at a discount. Disbelief is almost universal among educated Young Persians, and they make little secret of their opinions. While both elements worked together the clergy could conveniently ignore the heterodoxy of their political allies, but whenever there came a rift the irreligion of the Young Persian became a weapon in the hands of the orthodox. The clergy are now believed to be using all their great influence with the unsophisticated throughout the country to undermine the popularity of the Constitution. It is said that the Ulemas of Nedjef and Kerbela are supporting these efforts, and that adverse feeling has already begun to manifest itself not only in the provinces but in the capital. Recent events in Teheran have aggravated the tension. There occurred in July the assassination of the leading *mujtehed* (high priest), who had long opposed the addition of articles to the Constitution which curtailed the power of the clergy. He was supposed to have in his possession a manifesto from Kerbela denouncing the Constitution, which he was about to publish. Not long afterwards followed the murder of two prominent Nationalists, one my friend Ali Mohamed Khan, the nephew of Taki Zadeh, and the leader of the Azerbaijan *fidais*, evidently a reprisal by the clergy for the assassination of their leader. The most probable development of the immediate future then is, I am assured, a revulsion of feeling against the Constitution, caused by the machinations of the clergy throughout the country.

Now let me glance at the condition of the provinces. The north is perfectly quiet, for the presence of Russian troops deters rebellion or disorder on any scale. But in the south the situation continues as I have painted



it in previous chapters. In the far east the chiefs of Persian Beluchistan have practically declared themselves independent, without eliciting any notice from the Government. The chief of the Kashghais, the Sheikh of Mohammerah, and the Vali of Pushti-Kuh have signed a compact in which they constitute themselves the protectors of the Holy Mejliss—"May God cement its pillars," verbiage that has no significance except as a cloak thinly to conceal a defensive arrangement against the possibility of an extension of Bakhtiari influence. In the west a Kurdish tribe has defeated the troops of the Government, an event of little significance except to show that the Government is powerless in that direction. These more or less political manifestations, however, are overshadowed by constant robberies and lawlessness on all the highroads, and the almost complete cessation of internal trade. The small resources at the disposal of the Government prevent any real endeavour to deal with the situation, besides which there is the tribal jealousy which will not tolerate measures from a Government in which the Bakhtiaris are supreme.

From a sketch of the position in Persia itself I now come to the British and Russian view of the situation. The policy embodied in the Agreement entails the principle of non-intervention in Persian affairs so long as foreign life and property are not threatened. It is perfectly clear, therefore, that on all the recent occasions on which Russian troops, or British, set foot on Persian soil there occurred no transgression of the declared policy, for on each of these occasions there existed tangible danger to foreign interests. To what extent the constant advice to the Persian Government, and the frequent exercise of moral pressure, constituted infringement of the self-imposed policy of non-inter-

vention I am not prepared to say, since international pundits have never exactly defined the meaning of the word. Anyhow, it is obvious that in the circumstances the Powers were bound to make every possible effort to prevent a debacle which would give rise to the situation they wished to avoid. The remarkable harmony characterising British and Russian action in situations of extreme delicacy eloquently testifies to the smooth working of the Agreement, and to the timeliness of its conclusion so far as Persian affairs are concerned. Incidentally, one wonders what sort of welter would have resulted from Persian efforts at revolution if it had not been for the existence of the Agreement. But for all the harmony, there is no overlooking the fact that there is a radical difference of opinion between the two Powers as to the best method of dealing with the situation. It is abundantly clear that the Russians regard the Persians as incapable of governing themselves in accordance with modern requirements as regards trade and the maintenance of tranquillity. I do not believe a single European of any nationality thinks them capable of doing so without foreign assistance, and he would, indeed, be a hardy optimist who could think so in view of recent doings. Nevertheless British official opinion continues to affect to believe that there is hope of a purely Persian solution, despite the suggestion from all official correspondence and utterances that no individual official believes the situation can be so remedied. It is because Russia, against her better judgment, has deferred to British wishes, to this wonderful epileptic optimism that makes us so slow to take strong measures when they are obviously demanded, and followed a policy contrary to her own conviction, that one realises the sincerity of her adherence to the spirit of the *entente*. The



Persians declare that the Russians have set at naught that clause of the Agreement which stipulates for the maintenance of Persian integrity, and repeatedly broken their promises in regard to the withdrawal of troops. In the first place, the clause relating to Persian independence concerns only the two parties to the Agreement, and is in no wise an undertaking to Persia. So long, therefore, as Russia has acted in agreement with England there is no breach of covenant. Further, there has been no violation of Persian integrity, for the troops have not occupied territory or interfered with the administration. As regards the breaking of her promises, Russia has a very good answer. To leave foreigners in Azerbaijan defenceless by removal of the troops from Tabriz and Ardebil, in the condition of helplessness in which the Persian Government has hitherto found itself, would be merely to give rise to future occasion for interference. As regards Kazvin, there is the answer that the situation in the capital has been so unsettled, and the Government so weak, that the presence of the troops as a precautionary measure has been desirable. The virulent character of the Teheran Press attacks on Russia is suggestive, too, that outrages on Russians might not impossibly occur, particularly when it is remembered what are the feelings of the Caucasians towards Russia. But, as already pointed out, the principal reason for the retention of Russian troops at Kazvin is a political one, consequent on the situation in St Petersburg. A powerful weapon has been placed in reactionary hands by the bitter anti-Russian agitation in Teheran. This feeling has been painted in lurid colours in the Russian Press, and has so aroused public opinion that M. Isvolsky finds it as much as his place is worth to order the withdrawal.

Opponents of the Anglo-Russian Agreement have



little doubt that Russia is steadily aiming at the absorption of northern Persia, and they see in what they call the undue retention of the troops irrefragable proof that their contention is correct. One is prepared to concede them so much, that there is a party in Russia which professes such a policy and unreservedly pursues it. But it is unthinkable that the Liberal Government which has controlled the destinies of Russia during the past few years should be so fatuous as to entertain such an idea. Even were reaction to become triumphant it is inconceivable that the main issues of Russian policy should be lost sight of for a moment by the assumption of responsibilities in Persia that could possibly be avoided. The defence of the western frontiers and the economic development of Siberia, the one essential to Russian empire, the other promising a magnificent reward, are tasks the performance of which in the future must occupy Russian endeavours to the full, leaving no room for the pursuit of futile aims in a poverty-stricken country like Persia. Adventure in Persia, moreover, would embroil Russia with Turkey and add another to the Balkan and Caucasian questions that give trouble on her southern frontiers. Indeed, there seems to be no advantage at all to be gained for Russia by territorial extension in Persia, for any mortal thing she can desire in that country is attainable without interference with its independence. Her facilities for trade are practically all they would be if the country were her own; any concessions required can easily be obtained from the Persian Government; even if she desired to construct strategic railways for the invasion of India, she can freely do so without occupation.

British relations with Persia in the last few years constitute a long and not very brilliant chapter in our

diplomatic history. Among a host of other things we allowed the Persians in 1902 to make a commercial treaty with Russia that entailed a heavy handicap on our trade; we accepted without protest Customs regulations that were totally unsuited to conditions in the Persian Gulf, and that materially hamper business to this day; we have continually allowed our merchants to be mulcted by fraudulent bankruptcies; we permit a long list of admitted claims on the Government to remain outstanding; we suffer interest and amortisation on our loan to Persia to remain unpaid for years. The list of grievances could be extended indefinitely, but it will be sufficient to sum them all up in a remark made to me by a prominent man of business in Persia: "Our experience of the Persian Government has been an exceedingly bitter one."

Well, it seems to me that the Persians are perfectly justified in taking just as much liberty with us as we allow them to take. In the old days they could take liberties with us freely, for we did not venture to press them for fear of throwing them into the arms of Russia. The capacity to foment rivalry between Western Powers has been one of the few weapons possessed by Oriental states in their struggle against the encroachment of foreign influence, and the Persians cannot be blamed for employing it to the full in our case. But that weapon has surely lost its edge if the Anglo-Russian Agreement is worth the paper upon which it is written. That must be apparent to the Persians too, though they still find on our part, doubtless somewhat unaccountably, a good deal of the consideration for their feelings which used to be such a feature of our policy. We have offered them the loan of money on reasonable terms for the purpose of re-establishing order, a result far more to be desired in their interest than in ours.



They decline our help, without thanks, and our interests continue to suffer because of their petulance. There is not a country in the world which, nor a statesman who, would not regard it as perfectly reasonable if we took our own measures for maintaining tranquillity in southern Persia, just as Russia has done so successfully in the north.

We spend a great deal of money in the Persian Gulf on the upkeep of our prestige, and at the same time allow ourselves to be belittled in Persia in many ways. If prestige is desirable in these regions, it would be interesting to know why we build it up with one hand and knock it down with the other. There is involved, too, definite interests, those of our merchants in Persia, and those of our manufacturers in Great Britain and India. We spend more money on diplomatic and consular representation in Persia than we do in any two of the first-class countries in the world. And it is all public money, contributed to by the very parties who are suffering from our irresolution in Persia. We are a very humanitarian people, greatly given to forwarding the social and spiritual fortunes of others less blessed than ourselves. But it is a futile sort of humanity that allows our own countrymen to be hurt, while at the same time it permits an ignorant country like Persia to continue unchecked in the way that leads to disruption. It would seem as if the sooner we act the parental part towards Persia, the better it will be for Persia in the end and the less troublesome for ourselves in the future.

British policy in Persia has been inspired in the past by strategic rather than commercial considerations. In the rivalry between Russia and ourselves British diplomacy in Teheran has always found itself at a great disadvantage, for the power of the sword



was necessarily wanting to us in the north, and that of the purse was acquired by our rival by extravagance which it would have been foolish to have tried to emulate. In these circumstances our influence over the Persian Government was a declining quantity. Efforts at rehabilitation in the south, where we might have taken up a strong position, would merely have thrown Persia still more into Russian hands. There is, indeed, much excuse to be made for the weakness of British policy up to the date of the signing of the Anglo-Russian Convention, and it is one of the arguments in favour of that compact that it releases us henceforward from the obligation to treat Persian questions otherwise than on their merits. The arrangement with Russia, in fact, has completely changed the situation; and where we have hitherto abstained from demanding fair treatment of our commerce, for fear that coercion on our part would be used as an excuse by Russia to forward her own aggressive designs, we can now insist on obtaining justice, assured that Russia will not stand in the way nor take advantage of the situation.

What British interests demand, therefore, is a full recognition by the British Government of the change that has taken place, and active protection for our commerce instead of neglect. The Russian bogey removed, there seems no reason why we should continue to put up with a situation that has been eminently unsatisfactory for years. With exemplary patience British merchants have waited for the fruits of the reform movement which has received the consistent support of the British Government. A Constitutional party, however, has now been in power in Teheran for over a year, and nothing whatever has been done to restore order in the south. Indeed the condition



TO THE  
MOUNTAINS



*Crossing the Elburz Mountains.*



of the south is worse than it ever was even in the darkest days of absolutism. Northern Persia, owing to the presence of Russian troops, is as quiet as a sheepfold; while the whole of the south, owing, let us say, to the absence of British troops, is delivered over to bands of brigands. There is not a single road in the south of Persia safe for travel or commerce. What the half-ruined British merchant wants to see, at this moment when his future is at stake, is the adoption of practical measures to secure a practical result.

The point, of course, is — What would constitute practical measures? The world holds for us so many problems of vital interest that to waste time and energy on the deserts of Persia obviously would be the purest folly. To increase our responsibilities in the Middle East when the garrison of India is regarded as barely adequate to face the ominous situation on the north-western frontier, consequent on the flooding of Afghanistan and the independent tribal regions with modern arms, is what we firmly decline to do, even at the cost of the loss of our trade and the diminution of our prestige in Persia. If practical measures meant military occupation few sane people would demand them. But there is a comparatively simple solution of the Persian problem, in so far as British interests are principally concerned—one that only requires a little courage to effect, and one which, moreover, would prove acceptable to our Russian friends. In spite of the anarchy that reigns in the greater part of Persia, and the vehement talk that prevails elsewhere, the character of the inhabitants throughout almost the length and breadth of the land is exceedingly mild. In the absence of authority disorder immediately bursts forth and brigands become very

brave. The bravery, however, is of the kind that beats a hasty retreat before a show of force. The Bakhtiari, for instance, are reputed, not upon very good ground, it must be admitted, to be among the bravest of the Persian tribes, but the manner in which they collapsed in the oil-fields affair when confronted by twenty Indian soldiers was ludicrous, and entirely illustrative of the effect to be produced in Persia by moral force. They could have eaten the twenty soldiers, but because the twenty expressed the clearly defined will of the British Government they flew to their knees. It is our gentlemanly habit to treat the Persian Government on terms of diplomatic equality, with the result that we encounter an attitude of extraordinary independence that is the outcome purely of the artificial plane upon which we have placed relations. Unreason and obstruction is our constant reward, and the situation so created makes the conduct of negotiations with the Persian Government more difficult than with that of any first-class Power. International relations in Europe are backed by well-understood realities, and business is comparatively simple. But in Persia there is no reality, and we endeavour to deal with children as if they were grown-up people. Now and again we clearly intimate our intention to stand no more nonsense, and then things go beautifully, and the children behave themselves quite nicely; for after all it is the Oriental character—in so far as it is possible to generalise upon the character of the peoples of a whole continent—to bend contentedly before strength of purpose. I hold the opinion, therefore, that we should encounter no real opposition from the Persians if we explained to them in a friendly and fatherly manner that we proposed certain measures for the safeguard-



ing of our mutual interests in southern Persia, and there and then laid before them a scheme which we intended to carry out, preferably through them, but without them if necessary.

The plan which I propose to delineate is neither new nor original, and is frequently the subject of discussion among students of Persian affairs. Briefly, it is the establishment in southern Persia of a corps on the lines of the Persian Cossack Brigade, recruited in Persia but officered from the Indian Army. The object primarily would be the protection of the trade routes and the maintenance of the authority of the Persian Government in the south. Funds could easily be obtained. Security of trade would lead to an instant and material increase of the Customs revenue at Bushire, and a portion thereof might be allotted to the corps. At present, even in times of order, there is a long list of illegal taxes charged by tribesmen on each caravan passing northward from Bushire. For this blackmail, arbitrarily levied and frequently exceeded, a fixed charge could be substituted which would provide a large and regular income. If necessary, a third source of revenue could be created by devoting to the corps a share of the ordinary taxation of the districts affected by its establishment. That would entail no hardship on the Government, for, getting no taxes from these regions now, they would be the gainers by anything that would accrue in consequence of the security conferred by the existence of the corps. Initial outlay for buildings, arms, and equipment could be met by a small loan from the British Government. The corps would be under the Persian Government, which would ask for the loan of Indian officers and native N.C.O.'s acquainted with the Persian language, and would be recruited in their name. The whole scheme might



emanate straight from the Persians, and affect their prestige not at all. While supreme control would lie with the Persian Government, it would be essential that the officer in command should be allowed a free hand in the task of maintaining order, and considerable powers of initiative without reference to Teheran.

Commencing with a single regiment, which would be ample for the protection of the trade route between Bushire and Isfahan, the corps might slowly, and according to need, be augmented to 2000 or 3000 men, a force that I believe could maintain order throughout all the more populous regions in the south. Our experience on the North-West Frontier will at once suggest how readily the wild tribes now responsible for disorder would take service in such a corps, and so find themselves ranged on the side of order. The prestige of the corps would speedily become great, and its mere name would be sufficient to put terror into the hearts of evil-doers. Not only, therefore, would its establishment clear the trade routes, but its ultimate development ought to settle the question of the dominance of the Persian Government over the unruly tribes in the south, now very definitely threatened in various directions. It could also be intimated to the Persian Government that we would be prepared to consider the question of reduction in the number of the British officers, and their final retirement altogether, when Persian officers developed fitness to take their places.

It will be seen that I am no advocate for any interference with Persian independence, unless some plan on the lines indicated may be so described. It seems to me that economic competition throughout the world is so strong that not even we, with all our accumulated wealth, can afford to spend a penny

without the prospect of adequate return. Having already, in former work, expressed my opinion upon the economic poverty of Persia,<sup>1</sup> I have not endeavoured in this volume to repeat my arguments in support of it. It is an opinion, however, shared in many responsible quarters, and none who hold it can believe that we would be justified in taking extensive measures for the maintenance of our small interests in Persia, even if there were no greater or more imperative reasons which forbade it. But the expedient suggested would cost us nothing, would effect practically all we required in the way of security for our commerce, and would materially contribute to the general settlement of the Persian trouble. Corresponding measures in the north by Russia, where the Cossack Brigade has been in existence for years, though it has never yet been usefully employed, would equally maintain order in the north without expense to Russia, and permit the withdrawal of the troops so distasteful to Persian vanity. The latest Persian Cabinet proposes to abolish the old army and to raise a force of 30,000 men for the maintenance of order throughout the country. That is nonsense, for one-fifth the number, properly found, trained, paid, and officered, would be ample for the purpose. Another 1000 men added to the Cossack Brigade, and the forming of a corresponding body in the south of equal numbers, making a total of 5000 altogether, would meet the case entirely, would cost Persia comparatively little, and do more to restore the authority of the Government than ten times the number organised by the Persians themselves.

In taking leave of Persia I am compelled to join with other travellers and students, notably Lord Curzon, in

<sup>1</sup> 'The Marches of Hindustan.'

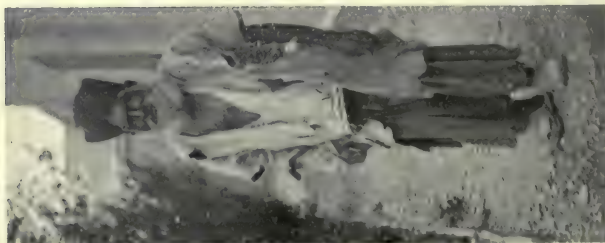
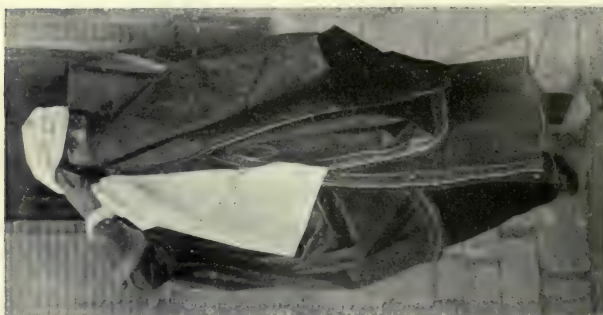


recording a poor estimate of the practical qualities of the Persian character. It is needless to repeat what has been said or indicated so often in these pages; the facts speak more eloquently than any words in support of the opinion that the Persians are incapable of managing their own affairs without foreign guidance—that is to say, incapable of managing them in a way to satisfy civilised requirements as regards foreign vested interests and facilities for trade. A handful of strong foreign officials, with executive powers, would, I am convinced, effect wonders in the administration; but this innovation is not likely to be accepted by the Persians, whatever professions they may make to the contrary, until the Powers express unequivocally their intention to put Persian affairs on a sound footing. When that is done—as it would seem must happen soon—the Persians, I believe, will accept the situation with a grace they have not hitherto been suspected of. The truth is that their sober men have long recognised the situation, and that it is only the headstrong and ignorant who compose the noisiest section of the Nationalists who cannot see it, or decline to see it. But the impotence of the Mejliss has already materially lowered its prestige, and it will not take very much longer before the country, in so far as it is articulate, will be thankful to see its composition greatly changed, and a quieter and more useful set of men at the head of affairs. There are capable men in Persia, but unfortunately some of the best of them decline to take an active part in politics, partly because their motives would be suspected and their characters blackened, and partly because they understand too well the failings of the national disposition, and the insuperable difficulties of leading an ignorant, headstrong, and irresponsible Assembly. It is a pity that such men do



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*Subjects of the Shah.*

not possess more self-confidence and more strength of character, but it is not their fault that some evil genius has looked into the Persian soul and withered some of its courage. There is great natural intelligence in Persia, great versatility, and a remarkable capacity for enthusiasm. With these good qualities go instability, and a vanity that is probably a greater curse to Persian character than any of its other defects. Nevertheless, I am a believer in the Persian, for his buoyant temperament and high intelligence appeal irresistibly to one's sympathy; one cannot believe but that he will develop generously when his colossal ignorance has been enlightened, and his disposition sobered by contact with the materialities of modern civilisation.

Meanwhile, it is only for Russia and England, who have so much reason to desire peace and quiet in Persia, to hope that the Persians will abate somewhat their self-confidence, and their distrust in each other, and recognise the necessity for outside help both in men and money. They are at present endeavouring to evade the inevitable by disagreeing among themselves as to the employment of Americans, Swiss, Swedes, and so forth, to advise and assist in the re-organisation of the administration. To go for men outside the countries that alone will provide them with the sinews of war seems both stupid and ungracious, and a method of hiding the head in the sand that will not in the least save them from any danger that may be impending. England and Russia hold Persia in their hand, to do with as they will. Even among their co-religionists the Persians need expect no sympathy, for their country is held in disfavour throughout the whole of the Mohammedan world, principally on account of their heresy in the matter of the Caliphate, and in some



degree because of their personal shortcomings. In the circumstances common caution would suggest the advisability of conciliating the Powers with whom their fate lies, rather than treating them with suspicion and dislike. The question of the nationality of the foreigners to be employed is really secondary, but to bring in outsiders will hardly engender sympathy between Persia and her great neighbours, or make the arrangement of a loan more easy. In any case, it is upon this question of foreigners that the immediate future of Persia depends, for until she elects to employ them, or the Powers impose them upon her, no amelioration of the existing chaos can be expected.

*Note.*—At the moment of going to press, it is announced that a plan for the restoration of order in southern Persia, similar to the one outlined in this chapter, has been adopted by the British Government. The Persian Government have been notified that if there is no improvement in the situation within three months, British officers of the Indian Army will be employed to raise a Persian corps for the maintenance of security on the principal trade route.

## CHAPTER XIX.

## THE AFFAIRS OF BAGHDAD.

FROM Bushire I took ship up the Gulf to Mohammerah, and there changed into a little steam-launch that in turn brought me to Bussorah, where I was just in time to catch the *Khalifah* sailing for Baghdad. There was some excitement on board, for another boat had just arrived from up-country and reported the Beni Lam Arabs fighting among themselves. When the Arab sees red there is no knowing in what direction he may turn his eyes and his rifle, and in view of the *Khalifah's* past experience nothing seemed more possible than a second attack. That which had occurred a year before was plainly indicated by the numerous bullet-holes with which her funnel and superstructure were riddled. The steel plates by which her bridge was protected implied that the danger of attack was ever present, even though the presence of Turkish troops in the disturbed area suggested its improbability. Ultimately, however, we got through without trouble, though there was plenty of evidence to prove local excitement. At one encampment on the river bank there was a gathering of armed men who were reported just back from a victory over the enemy in the adjacent hills. We saw several large parties on the march, and a great deal of activity in the numerous camps bordering the river.

When nearing Baghdad the captain was kind enough to put several of the passengers ashore for the purpose of visiting the Arch of Chosroes, all that remains of a city that in its day was one of the greatest in the world. Built originally by the Parthians to replace the conquered and destroyed Selucia, the mounds of which are still visible on the opposite bank of the Tigris, and which is said to have held no fewer than 600,000 inhabitants, Ctesiphon attained the height of its prosperity under the Sassanides, and in the sixth century A.D. is stated to have been capital of a region whereof the land-tax equalled £35,000,000. Nine-tenths of alluvial Babylonia is supposed to have been under cultivation; while Mesopotamia generally, from the head of the Persian Gulf to the foot of the mountains of Asia Minor, was inhabited by ten to twelve millions of people, where to-day a liberal estimate puts the figures below two millions. The famous Arch, which is a landmark for many miles around, is the remains of a gigantic hall used as an audience-chamber by the kings. 164 feet long, 120 high, and 82 wide, this apartment must have been of grand proportions, and is magnificent still despite its ruined state; the lightness and delicacy with which the pitch of the vault has been attained is marvellous to behold. The contrast between this one splendid relic of bygone greatness and the mud dwellings of the few cultivators in the neighbourhood is most profound. There was not only in the past the wealth and prosperity which made great things possible, but there was the mind to conceive and the artistic skill to execute. But now the wealth, the prosperity, the intellect, and the art of the ancient inhabitants have vanished from this country as completely as if they had never been.

There remains the poor settled Arab, laboriously





*The Porch of Chosroes, all that remains of Ctesiphon.*



*Some of the "born tired" (see page 319).*

TO THE  
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CALIFORNIA

tilling a narrow strip on either side of the great Tigris, that is to-day exactly as it was when great civilisations were evolved on its banks. One cannot conceive of our modern civilisation disappearing so mysteriously. Ruinous wars and natural catastrophes might shift the centres of political power, but it is difficult to think that the genius of the English or the Germans or the French would be extinguished because of any upheavals, social, political, or physical. Scientific knowledge, art, philosophy, would remain and in time bear fruit again. But here there is no recrudescence of ancient civilisation, but a fatalistic acceptance of almost the lowest possible ideals, with apparently little capacity for regeneration from within. Social decay is, of course, the obvious explanation; but why should there be social decay? Is there not some great physical reason for the gradual transfer of intellectual activity from the Middle East to the West? Mesopotamia was surely the centre of the world at one period in history, while to-day its inhabitants are among the most decadent in Europe or Asia, owing the little civilisation they still possess to stimulation from without. One feels that climate has been at work on the human character and disposition of these regions, and that the meteorology of Mesopotamia, were it available for the past 5000 years, would throw a flood of light upon the causes of the great changes that have taken place.

The deck of a Tigris steamer is instructive of the temperament of the Arab in particular and the Oriental in general. The native passengers were content to sit still all day and to sleep at night. They ate, and smoked, and drank plain water, sometimes a mouthful of coffee, processes that never seemed to result in action, or to be expressed in energy, for they never moved from their places, nor did anything but gaze



vacantly into space. The Europeans on board, however, marched up and down incessantly, like caged animals. If they desisted, it was to eat, or to read, or to write. To do nothing seemed with them to be an unattainable frame of mind. Such activity may be feverish, even morbid, but however we denominate it, it is the expression of the energy, enterprise, and intellect which have gone to create modern civilisation. The comparison is interesting because of its bearing upon the future of this country. It seems clear that the regeneration of Mesopotamia, a subject much before the public in recent years, must be attained principally through the agency of the Arab, if it is to be attained at all. But if the Arab is so incorrigibly apathetic in temperament and disposition, he cannot but prove a poor instrument towards the desired end. It is not suggested that he will prove an impossible instrument, but merely that any material development of the economic condition of the country must be accompanied by a substantial modification in the character of the inhabitants. In what degree such modification can occur within a limited time is for the ologists to say.

On the fifth day after leaving Bussorah the *Khalifah* entered the broad reach in the Tigris bordered by the city of Baghdad. The sight of that long vista of shining water, overlooked by endless terraces and verandahs, reflecting a thousand tall date-palms, dotted with anchored craft of strange shape and curious form, and scored across so quaintly by the floating bridge of boats, is not to be easily forgotten. Nor can one forget that this is the Baghdad of the Caliphs, the city of so many human dreams, the place above all in the world, perhaps, that the would-be wanderer would first visit were the gods kind. One looks, and is



*“ . . . that shining vista of water, reflecting a thousand tall date-palms . . . ”*



*“ . . . scored across so quaintly by the floating bridge of boats . . . ”*

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CALIFORNIA



thankful for the privilege of seeing. The *Khalifah* drops anchor opposite the white balconies of the British Residency, above which waves the pleasant old rag that one never tires of seeing in far-off parts. A boat puts off for the mail, and at the same time comes a letter for me from kind folk of my own land in whose memory it seemed I dwell as a small kilted boy with square knees. So, with hospitable quarters awaiting me, I leave the *Khalifah*, unburdened of the precious mails, to steam quietly up to her berth beside the bridge of boats.

Having formerly visited Baghdad in the murderous heat of summer, I found the cool weather of winter very pleasant by contrast. Where before I had dripped under a punkah, I was now glad to sit in a verandah in the full glare of the sun, for it can be chilly enough on the shady side of a house in the month of February. It seemed good working weather, and if this were the normal climate of Mesopotamia how easy its regeneration would be. Then, even the Eskimos might be expected to immigrate, as well as white people from all the temperate regions of the earth.

There is a spirit of optimism about Baghdad in these days that was not apparent before. To account for it there is first and foremost the Revolution that has given Turkey a new Government, and riddance from the old suspicious and grasping *régime*. There has arisen something not unlike the public opinion of Western countries, and there is freedom to express it within reasonable limits. Great schemes like the Baghdad Railway, and the irrigation projects of Sir William Willcocks, in these new circumstances, have begun to look more like possibilities than the dreams they were supposed to be in the old repressive days. The German engineers are actually at work on the railway,

a thousand miles away it is true, yet something is being done after the long six-year wait at Bulgurlu. And as for irrigation, is not Sir William Willcocks on the spot with a large staff of engineers? So the price of land has soared to the skies, rents have gone up in sympathy, and hopes are generally running high.

All sorts of schemes are in the air. A sensible one proposes the establishment of wireless telegraphy stations at Baghdad, Bussorah, Mosul, Aleppo, and Damascus. Where the telegraph wires are now continually being damaged by mischievous Arabs or by floods and storms, and communication sometimes interrupted for weeks on end, this innovation would be of great convenience. Another proposal is for the institution of a tramway service, but this presents difficulty owing to the manner in which the city is densely huddled upon the banks of the river, and because the latter is not spanned by a proper bridge. The present bridge of boats is a constant source of anxiety during times of flood, for it occasionally breaks loose and spins down the river in sections that scrape verandahs off riverside villas and deal destruction to craft at anchor. To construct, for the purposes of a tramway, a main thoroughfare on each side of the Tigris, and a bridge sufficiently high to permit the passage of masted country boats, entails expropriation and expenditure on a very considerable scale. An alternative scheme proposes a ferry-boat service on the lines of that maintained on the Bosphorus. This would effectively serve a city that crowds towards its magnificent waterway; it would have the merit, too, in a very dusty country, of being more pleasant to use.

One of the Baghdad problems that will have to be



*A Street in Baghdad.*



*" . . . The Khalifah steams quietly up to her berth beside the bridge of boats . . . "*



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solved at an early date is that of the Custom-house. This institution is at present a desperate handicap on the trade of the town. It is situated on the river-bank at the point where houses and shops are most crowded and where property is most valuable, and where extension is consequently extremely hard to arrange. Moreover, the building is no other than a University founded by Harun-al-Rashid, and probably as inconvenient a structure as could possibly be imagined for the use to which it is now put. It is a regular rabbit-warren of low dark rooms, where the students of long ago used to pass a miserable existence. Great parts of it are in ruins, which afford a fine dwelling for bats. Upon one dark-vaulted ceiling shown me there were hundreds of these queer little beasts clinging to the roof, so tightly that not even the throwing of stones would induce them to move. The bathroom of the famous Caliph, a curious round room, is shown the visitor, as well as various inscriptions and quaint features, natural in a building reputed to be the oldest in Baghdad, but far from appropriate to a Customs dépôt. A feature of the Baghdad trade is the transit traffic to Persia. Through shipments by ocean steamer and river boat are dealt with by the Customs in Baghdad, where the goods are examined and repacked in different sizes for animal transport. The process has to be carried out within the Custom-house precincts, and leads to awful confusion and heart-breaking delay, owing to the limited space available. River frontage for dealing with the steamers is also deficient, as well as conveniences for loading and unloading. Altogether the facilities for dealing with a trade averaging in value £2,500,000 per annum are ridiculously inadequate, and prompt one to remark that the Turkish Government might very well

devote themselves to organising and facilitating the existing trade before discussing grandiose schemes for its development. As a remedy for the present state of affairs it has been proposed to remove the Custom-house to a site down-stream and well outside the town. This plan is viciously opposed by property holders and others with vested interests, for it means the transference of the commercial centre of gravity to another spot, where these good folk have no holding. It would be for the salvation of trade in general, but to the great loss of the interested parties. Corruption is now abolished in the Turkish Empire, so what is for the public good will surely come to pass—unless the interested parties prove themselves too influential.

And this brings me to the question which not long ago caused such a flutter in local dovecotes, and is supposed to have brought about the downfall of a Turkish Ministry. I refer, of course, to the proposal to amalgamate the British and Turkish steamer lines navigating the Tigris river. As events in connection with the proposal are of quite recent occurrence it will be sufficient to recapitulate them briefly. Towards the end of 1909 it became public that the Turkish Government had decided to accept the amalgamation scheme, which had been hatching for a long time, whereupon violent opposition sprang up in Baghdad, with a vigorous counterpart in Constantinople. The Government announced its intention of standing or falling by its decision, despite which a most damaging resolution was passed in Parliament by a large majority. Then suddenly the opposition collapsed, and the Government was supported by a vote of 168 to 8, the 40 stalwart opponents of the scheme abstaining from voting. In spite of this substantial victory, however, the amalgamation was dropped, and the Grand Vizier resigned, the



cause of his downfall being generally attributed to his attitude on this very point. The obscurity surrounding these events is not difficult to penetrate, when certain facts are known. The true inwardness of the affair is not a little instructive.

The Press supporters of the Government in Constantinople freely attributed the opposition to German intrigue. It is known that the German Embassy was opposed to the fusion, and I know for a fact that the Baghdad deputy who led the opposition was at the time in close relationship with the German Embassy. The conclusion to be drawn is obvious, though there seems no reason to call it "intrigue," when opposition was perfectly reasonable in view of the danger to the prospects of the Baghdad Railway involved in the organisation on sound lines of the navigation of the Tigris. That the Germans gave all possible support to the opposition admits of little doubt, but independently of that the opposition had its own game to play, wherein lies the interest from the local point of view.

The Hamidieh Company was the property of Sultan Abdul Hamid, and upon his deposition passed to the Turkish Government. Its new owners, like the Sultan before them, realised that the management of the line was essentially bad, for the business knowledge to make it a success was lacking. All sorts of people had a finger in the pie, and when ignorant soldiers were not making a mess of the management cleverer persons were exploiting it for their own benefit. Among the lower officials bribery and corruption were common, and it was not difficult for those who were prepared to pay to obtain rebates and concessions and opportunities in the shipment of cargo which gave them a great advantage over their commercial rivals. The

Sultan, understanding the situation, had agreed in principle to the fusion, and the new Constitutional Government continued the negotiations and finally agreed upon terms. The affair then became public, and the coterie of interested Baghdad merchants was immediately up in arms. They themselves had always hoped to get possession of the steamers, but the fusion meant not only the loss of that opportunity, but the disappearance of all the advantages already enjoyed. Hence the agitation in Baghdad. The wire-pullers in Constantinople got at the local Young Turk organisation, and raised the bogey of a British monopoly, with the darker shadow behind it of British designs on the economic and political independence of Turkish Arabia. The Young Turks raked in all the politically inclined, and the interested merchants, Mohammedan, Jewish, and Christian, sounded the tocsin against high freights and preference for foreigners. A meeting of several thousands of people assembled—the means by which they were induced to attend are amusing—and high patriotism was the order of the day. Fiery resolutions were passed—and immediately telegraphed to Constantinople.

Public excitement reached such a pitch that the British community began to fear a demonstration—there are so many people in Baghdad with nothing particular to do! But nothing happened, and in a day or two the excitement died down. The agitation, however, had been communicated to Constantinople, and supplied the leverage there for the organisation of a Press and Parliamentary campaign against the fusion. The Government wisely showed the papers to the leaders of the principal party in opposition in Parliament, and convinced them of the advantage of the amalgamation from the national point of view.



That resulted in the Parliamentary vote of confidence already mentioned, and in the discomfiture of the interested parties. It looked as if the fusion were to be an accomplished fact. Yet it is not; and the Government that stood for it went out of power, despite its victory on the point. The truth is that the Government of the day was overruled by the power behind—the military section, in fact, of the Committee of Union and Progress. It is here that one suspects German pressure, for it may very reasonably be supposed that Germany used her influence with the military element to quash a scheme that affected her interests.

In view of the secret influences at work, the merits of the terms of the fusion, needless to say, were not involved at all. The two principal objections were that it conferred a monopoly and was a step towards the British occupation of Mesopotamia. The latter assumption is not worth discussing, while the former is disposed of by the fact that the conditions imposed by the Turkish Government precluded the possibility of undue exploitation, though they conceded exclusive rights. The fact that the principals in London of all the British trade interests in Baghdad and Bussorah memorialised Sir Edward Grey in support of the fusion suggests, at least, that the parties most nearly concerned had no fears on the point. It was generally recognised that a properly managed company, with the right to navigate the river in whatever manner seemed most suitable and profitable—a right always denied to the Lynch company—would have the effect of lowering freights and stimulating business. The Lynch difficulty has always been that they have been allowed only two steamers, latterly three, with permission for a single barge to



be towed by each steamer, limitations which have prevented proper exploitation of the river traffic. The amalgamation would remove all these limitations, and give the new company full power to employ as many boats of the most suitable pattern as required. Obviously one of the first things to do would be to use the present boats for fast passenger and mail traffic, and for goods to import strong tugs to tow pairs of barges as is done on the Bengal and Burma rivers. The result would be smaller expenses and lower freights. The terms of the fusion also included rights of navigation on the upper Tigris and on the Euphrates; and though these do not seem to be concessions of much value in present circumstances, they might well become so in enterprising hands, and might lead to material development in other parts of Mesopotamia. Altogether it would seem to be a great pity that the amalgamation scheme has been dropped by the Turkish Government, but the merits of it are so apparent that there is every prospect of resurrection—when German opposition is overcome.

Among the many strange features of Baghdad is the constant passage of pilgrims from Persia to the holy places of the Shiah sect. The figures for a recent year state that 95,000 pilgrims paid sanitary taxes on crossing the border, and that they brought with them for burial in holy ground 8000 corpses, besides 60,000 beasts of burden. It costs each living pilgrim 10 piastres (1s. 8d.) to enter the country, and a corpse about five times as much, according as it has the meat on or off, in the irreverent language of the medicos. Burial of a corpse costs anything from five shillings to five pounds, according to the sacredness of the soil. Poor pilgrims walk, but the richer

ride, accompanied by what retinue they can afford. Wealthy Persians crave burial within the mosques of either of the famous Imams at Nedjef or Kerbela, and their funerals are costly affairs, necessitating transport of a body from remote parts of Persia, with servants in attendance and mullahs constantly reading prayers as the caravan proceeds. Muzaffar-ed-Din Shah left orders that he was to be buried at Kerbela, but his body still remains at Teheran, because the Government cannot afford the enormous expenditure involved in carrying out the wishes of the dead monarch.

Another curious traffic across the Persian border is that of duellists from Baghdad. Baghdad contains representatives, official and otherwise, of pretty nearly all the countries in the world, and many of them, of course, combine a fiery temperament with a delicate sense of honour. Naturally, in the damnable heat of summer, offence is occasionally given and taken, which can only be atoned by the spilling of blood. As Turkish law forbids single combat, the parties are compelled to seek the nearest ground where their differences can be settled without the interference of the police; and there being no police in Persia, to Persia they go. My informant told me about several recent affairs which fortunately did not have fatal endings, and promised to send me photographs of some of the encounters; but these, unluckily, have not arrived in time for inclusion in this volume. The favourite weapon, I am told, is not the rapier affected in Europe, but the old-fashioned pistol which shoots round the corner.

Outward and visible effects of the political revolution in Turkey are few in Baghdad, nor is it sure that much change has taken place beneath the sur-



face. The *gendarmes* have been supplied with leathern gaiters of a dazzling yellow colour, and generally appear better equipped than when I visited Baghdad two years ago, when there was not a hint of the coming change. Small twinkling lights where formerly there were none now help to render some of the streets less dark at night. Works of an ingenious kind supply water to the town by means of pipes running underground along the main streets. Hygienic experts declare the system poisonous, because the soil is permeated by moisture from tens of thousands of cesspools, and the joinings of the pipes are merely wrapped in dirty rags. Anything, however, would seem to be an improvement on the old-fashioned method of bringing water from the river to the houses in sheepskins that have never been cleaned since the dead bodies of their erstwhile wearers were taken out of them. A striking sign of the times is the appearance of a local Press, represented by one or two dozen newspapers that appear from time to time, according as their editors and publishers find moments of political enthusiasm coincide with periods of financial prosperity. Where the town used to be full of spies and all the walls had ears, there now appears to be complete freedom of speech. It would be too much to say that the Baghdad Press is either wise or well-informed. It is at least original, and highly critical of both local and Imperial affairs.

The Christian and Jewish communities are of course jubilant at the recent change in the situation, and may be accounted faithful adherents of the Constitutional movement. Religious intolerance has never in Baghdad reached the pitch it has in some other parts of Turkey; but though life has been safe and property not unreasonably secure, Mohammedan predominance has always hung like a sword over the aspirations of non-believers.



Removal of the feeling of repression has had a magnetic effect on the large Jewish community, said to number 50,000 souls. The better-off have forsaken their own quarter of the city and taken houses in more fashionable parts; they begin more freely to wear European clothes and to adopt western customs; while educational projects, heavily endowed by the wealthy, are being actively developed. One of them is a school where instruction is the same as in the Government military schools, and one of its objects is to teach the Turkish language and other subjects that will qualify young Jews to be officers in the army. The great bulk of the population, however, is Arab, and here one finds no enthusiasm for recent developments, and little recognition of the equality between all creeds which is such a feature of Young Turkish professions of faith at the seat of Government. The news of the deposition of Abdul Hamid was received in the town in dead silence, and the most that can be expected from the Arab community is an attitude of aloofness. One of the principal subjects of conversation when I was in Baghdad was that of the new Vali. Nazim Pasha had been appointed some time previously, but had not arrived on the scene owing, it was said, to differences with the Government as regards his powers, the scope of the reforms to be inaugurated, and the financing thereof. He had left Constantinople, however, before I reached there, in possession of a full mandate to effect a transformation throughout Mesopotamia. Recent correspondence reliably assures me that astonishing progress is being made and that Baghdad is hardly recognisable. One letter remarks that experienced residents have seen somewhat similar activity before by newly appointed Governors, but admits remarkable powers and force of character in Nazim Pasha, and only hopes that the improvement is not too good to be true.

## CHAPTER XX.

## THE IRRIGATION OF MESOPOTAMIA.

THE romantic picture of a regenerated Chaldea, painted for us by Sir William Willcocks, has passed from the realm of dreamland into the region of positive potentiality. One cannot enter the riverside palace at Baghdad, which Sir William has turned into a Temple of Irrigation, without being impressed by the steps that are being taken to give reality to the picture. Tents and surveying paraphernalia encumber the court-yards, lofty chambers overlooking the brown hurrying flood of the Tigris are littered with maps and drawings, compass and pencil in hand absorbed figures are spreading themselves over huge deal tables; while the presiding genius himself is here, there, and everywhere happily busy and busily happy in the task that occupies him from early morn till darkening night. There is time, however, to explain matters to those who wish to understand, and Sir William honours me with a detailed and illustrated description of the work in hand and the plans in process of formation.

Sir William Willcocks' idea had been before the public for some years when, in 1908, he was requested by the Turkish Government to submit a report upon the subject of irrigation in Mesopotamia. That report

recommended twelve different projects entailing the irrigation of some 3,200,000 acres at a total estimated cost of £7,410,000. The Government was so deeply interested by the schemes and impressed by the prospects that Sir William was forthwith engaged for a period of five years as Adviser, and instructed to proceed to Mesopotamia, there to undertake the surveys that were essential preliminaries to any action. Funds were allotted for expenses, and full authority given to Sir William to engage assistants and to take whatever steps he regarded necessary towards obtaining an accurate understanding of the conditions. Some twenty engineers were immediately engaged and brought to Baghdad, from whence they were sent in all directions to examine the ground and measure the levels. After a year of strenuous labour the results were collated, and Sir William again proceeded to Constantinople armed with definite information of a new and interesting character.

Investigation had shown that the deltas of the Tigris and Euphrates suffered more from a superabundance of water than from a lack of it, and that extensive canalisation must be preceded by a scheme for controlling the annual floods. Moreover, certain depressions were discovered which appear to have been used in ancient irrigation systems to deal with this recurring danger, surplus waters being discharged into them. Further, the realisation of a remarkable difference between the levels of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers suggested a simpler and more comprehensive scheme of canalisation to supersede those previously proposed. Sir William Willcocks now presented a new batch of plans to the Turkish Government. £60,000 had already been spent in surveys, and in connection with the Hindia barrage, of which more hereafter. To proceed with the new pro-



jects £150,000 was required for the year 1910, and that sum was duly budgeted for by the Government.

A few figures will clearly illustrate why lower Mesopotamia is a martyr to floods. The two great rivers enter their deltas at points each distant some 350 miles from the head of the Persian Gulf. From the ancient coast-line lying north and west of Baghdad, they meander backwards and forwards along this immense stretch of alluvium, each covering distances of some 700 miles in its progress to the sea, but falling no more than 170 feet. Spring floods from the melting snows of Asia Minor suddenly descend upon this flat region to find that the muddy river-beds are absolutely incapable of dealing with their waters, which accordingly breach the banks and inundate the surrounding country. The magnitude of these floods can be gauged by comparing the discharges at different times of the year. At low water both Tigris and Euphrates have a discharge of 10,000 cubic feet per second, at high water of 180,000 and 120,000 respectively. At certain points the flood water is kept within bounds by embankments, but these continually prove inadequate because not maintained on a sufficiently comprehensive scale. Immense areas have now been transformed into inland seas or into permanent marshes by the constant process of flooding, thereby withdrawing from cultivation regions that in ancient and even in comparatively modern times were highly developed.

Sir William Willcocks proposes to cure this evil, so far as it relates to the upper reaches of the Euphrates, by a simple and effective method. Between Hit and Kerbela lies a remarkable depression, the edge of which is only thirty miles from the Euphrates at Ramadi. In this short distance there is a drop of 70 feet, so that it is only necessary to

construct a barrage and to cut a canal from it to the depression to provide an easy escape for flood water. The depression is estimated to be large enough to contain the annual surplus waters of the Euphrates for many years to come, without taking into account diminution by evaporation. This project is expected entirely to release the banks of the Euphrates from the danger of floods for a distance of 200 miles. It is claimed that incalculable benefit will accrue to the cultivators on the banks of the river and of the numerous dependent canals, for they will henceforth be able to sow double or treble the amount of seed with the certainty of fruition, where hitherto the smaller crop has been in continual danger and has usually been totally lost every third year.

The second scheme involves the construction of what is known as the Hindia barrage. In comparatively recent years the Euphrates has deserted its own bed and followed that of the Hindia Canal, an ancient irrigation work taking off the river a little below the latitude of Baghdad. The consequence has been the water-logging of the region below the intake of the Hindia Canal, and the drying up of the banks of the real bed of the river. In both directions ruination has ensued. At the season of low water the Euphrates opposite Babylon is perfectly dry, and at high water the level is still so low as to be unsatisfactory to cultivators. For twenty years the Turkish Government has been endeavouring to construct a barrage at the mouth of the Hindia Canal, with the object of dividing the stream between the canal and the bed of the Euphrates, and thereby restoring prosperity to two large regions. Strong masonry walls were built from

each side, but all efforts to join the ends were defeated by the torrent of water which rushed through the narrow opening. The French engineers in charge of the work appear never to have been properly supported by the Turkish Government, else there is no doubt they would have been successful. With the advent of Sir William Willcocks' staff, however, there came sufficient funds, and by an ingenious plan the opening was filled up and the dam completed. Unluckily the barrage was breached immediately afterwards at another point, and the result of much labour destroyed. One of the principal tasks now being undertaken is the damming of the river at the intake of the Hindia Canal in an effective and permanent manner, whereafter sluices will give complete control of the water and permit of its diversion into the canal or into the real river. This work, in conjunction with that of the escape described in the above paragraph, is expected to create an agricultural revolution in the country of the Euphrates, and so to regularise the conditions that the institution of canalisation hereafter will be greatly simplified.

The third project is in itself much smaller, but of great importance, in that the main scheme for the irrigation of Mesopotamia on a large scale, if that should be decided upon, will probably be based upon its results. Not far below the contemplated escape at Ramadi is an old bed of the Euphrates now known as the Sakhlawia Canal. Running across it at a point near the present course of the river is a low limestone ridge upon which a dam once stood. At one period in ancient times the course of the river was diverted from the Sakhlawia bed by a long earthen embankment which remains to this day. Sir William Willcocks appears to have ascer-





*Mussayib.*



*Mesopotamian Buffaloes.*

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tained that it was this diversion in B.C.—has the year ever been definitely determined?—that caused Noah's Flood. Anyhow, the mouth of the Sakhlawia Canal is now blocked. Owing to escape further upstream, however, water from the Euphrates works round behind the dam and flows into the Sakhlawia Canal, itself a wide and deep trough capable of dealing with a great volume of water. It is proposed to construct a masonry embankment upon the limestone ridge, a cheap operation owing to the fine natural foundation and the proximity of the necessary materials, and to give the Sakhlawia Canal a regular supply of water, to the great profit of the inhabitants of its banks. The canal would still, as now, discharge into the small lake of Akkar Kuf, the centre of another remarkable depression lying to the north-west of Baghdad. The water of this lake is 15 feet below the level of the Tigris, which is distant only twenty miles. The lake and the surrounding depression, which is of considerable extent, is the feature upon which Sir William Willcocks bases his present plans for the comprehensive treatment of the whole problem of irrigation.

So far, however, action is being taken only in relation to the three projects described, though survey of the country in general, with a view to larger schemes, is busily continued. Sir William Willcocks estimates that their execution will entail a total expenditure of £700,000, and that they will be completed in 1912. The Turkish Government has sanctioned the work and budgeted for funds for this year, and doubtless contemplates provision of the necessary money for the two remaining years. Upon the timely and sufficient supply of funds, of course, depends the speed with which the work will proceed



and its efficiency when complete. Turkish Governments have not hitherto been remarkable for fixity of purpose or for readiness to furnish money for the prosecution of public works, but the great change which has recently taken place suggests the possibility that the plans now in process of execution may meet with the official support which they assuredly deserve.

Following a description of the projects actually in hand, there next arise for consideration those more important schemes for irrigation and railway construction whose fulfilment is Sir William Willcocks' declared ambition. The total area of the delta of the two rivers is put at 12,000,000 acres, of which about one-fifth is swamp and the rest desert, presumably susceptible of irrigation. In this large field surveys are now being conducted relating to a plan for the construction of a principal canal 150 miles long, calculated to supply water to 3,000,000 acres. Still more extensive schemes are germinating in the fertile brain of the presiding genius, but for the present Sir William contents himself with the one great canal, which he proposes should be named after Turkey's first constitutional monarch. This work will commence at the depression containing the Akkar Kuf lake, and will run beside the right bank of the Tigris, past Baghdad, and down to the entrance of the Hai Canal at Kut. Its left bank will serve as a dyke to check the floods of the Tigris, and as an embankment on which to construct a railway. Water will be distributed to cultivators on and to the west of the right bank only. The depression out of which this canal will flow will be filled by water partly furnished by the Sakhlawia Canal from the Euphrates as already described, and by another

great work from the Tigris, the head of which will be situated at Beled near an ancient dam said to have been constructed by Nimrod. At this point an immense weir will be built across the river, and a great part of its waters directed into the Akkar Kuf lake, fifty miles distant, down a slope of a foot per mile. In the large lake thus supplied from the two rivers the water will be allowed to deposit its silt before being run into the great irrigation canal below, a course rendered highly desirable for a variety of reasons. Sir William Willcocks does not venture at present to estimate the cost of this scheme, surveys for which are now being made. But the general idea is that a sum between £5,000,000 and £10,000,000 will be required to carry it out. Were funds available it would be possible to proceed at once with the more important masonry work relating to this project, as the danger of floods from either river could be obviated by isolating it with earthen embankments.

Closely allied to Sir William Willcocks' schemes for irrigation is one for the construction of a railway to carry the produce of Mesopotamia to market. In this connection Sir William resurrects the old plan for a line from the Mediterranean, so widely discussed before the construction of the Suez Canal, and again when the canal was in danger from Arabi Pashi. Our occupation of Egypt having secured communications with the East the advantage of a railway by this route became less conspicuous, while the granting to the Germans of the concession which grew into the Baghdad Railway Convention obliterated the idea altogether. Sir William very reasonably argues that if great quantities of wheat and cotton are to be grown in Mesopotamia, they must take the quickest way to market. By river to the Persian Gulf, thence round into the Red Sea,



and through the Suez Canal at heavy cost, certainly does seem an Irish pilgrimage when the straight road to the Levant is only some 500 miles. Nor does the way of the Baghdad Railway please Sir William, owing to its roundaboutness, and because of the likelihood that he and all his cultivators will be in their graves before Baghdad is reached. The advantages in time and convenience of a line to the Syrian coast are patent, while if the cost—£4000 per mile—estimated by Sir William is approximately correct, a little over £2,000,000 should cover the expense. There appears to be nothing in the German concession to prevent the construction of such a line, while if so many millions are to be spent on irrigation the small sum for the railway should not prove an obstacle. Indeed, a railway is really an absolute essential of the situation to be created, for when the sluices of the first great irrigation canal, above described, are opened, the waters of the Tigris will rush through them and leave the present waterway to the Gulf as dry as Piccadilly.

To restore prosperity to Mesopotamia, however, is not so simple as might appear. Desirable as is the success of Sir William Willcocks' schemes, in Turkish interests, and indirectly in British interests, it would serve no good end to overlook the numerous difficulties that present themselves to the unprejudiced eye. The problem here differs tremendously from that put for solution in India and Egypt in connection with irrigation. All the essentials were present in these two countries—water, money, population, market, and the complete political control which simplifies great enterprises. Here money and population are lacking, and though there is water in abundance, the necessity to procure money from abroad must to some degree involve politics. Even the matter of market is difficult



owing to the remoteness of Mesopotamia from the great centres of demand for produce and raw material. A brief examination of the various obstacles which block the way will indicate the magnitude of the task which Sir William Willcocks with magnificent optimism has taken upon his shoulders at a time of life when most men are only too glad to lay down their burthens.

Enough is known of the condition of Mesopotamia in olden times to make it clear that irrigation on a large scale is perfectly practicable, for the remains of comprehensive canal systems are everywhere visible, while ancient and mediæval writers have described in detail the extent of the canalisation and the consequent fertility of the soil. Where the ancients were successful, modern engineering cannot well fail. It is hardly necessary, therefore, to discuss the physical conditions, for they are admittedly ideal for irrigation. It is only a question of studying levels to discover the best means of applying the great quantity of water available to the immense stretches of unsurpassably rich alluvial soil. Minor problems, of course, await solution, principal among them that of the damming of the Euphrates at the head of the Hindia Canal. As the French engineers have discovered, the construction of a heavy masonry barrage on soft mud is not simple. During my visit to the scene of their labours there had been a rise in the river and the water was pouring over the obstruction with the utmost fury, as well as rushing through the breach already mentioned. The English engineer now in charge told me that below the opening which the Frenchmen had striven to close the river has scoured out a hole seventy feet deep. The force of the stream may be judged by the fate of a large heavily loaded *sephina* (country boat) which only the day

before had been shipwrecked. Her crew having lost control, she was swept on to the barrage, rolled over and over into deep water beyond, and ten of the people drowned in the whirling waters. The present plan is to mend the existing barrage, and to supplement it by another 600 yards up stream, thereby dividing the strain of holding up so much water. Should this plan prove unsuccessful, it will then probably be found necessary to adopt the expensive course of paving the river above and below the barrages, to prevent the water working underneath the masonry, as happened in the case of the last break. The great weir on the Tigris at Beled, should its construction be undertaken, fortunately does not present the same difficulty, for it will be located on good ground up stream of the point where the river enters the deltaic mud. Other problems of a practical nature are not likely to prove embarrassing to an engineer of Sir William Willcocks' experience and resource, and so far as the actual institution of irrigation works is concerned full confidence may be placed in his ability to overcome all obstacles.

The labour problem, however, should it prove difficult, as it assuredly must, is one that does not lie within the power of any one man to solve. It is estimated that to carry out the three projects described in my previous article within the allotted time, a labour force of 10,000 will be required. But the excavation of the great canal involved in the larger scheme will necessitate the employment of enormous numbers if it is contemplated, as Sir William Willcocks strenuously advocates, to complete the work within a comparatively short time. Still greater numbers will be required to cultivate the land thus watered. If India and Egypt are any criterion, it will take two or three millions of



people to settle the 3,000,000 acres which it is proposed to irrigate. A realisation of these figures prompts consideration of the population question.

A recent estimate for the Baghdad and Bussorah *vilayets*, formed on the best available information, puts the total settled and semi-nomad inhabitants at 1,480,000, and the local nomads at no more than 30,000. This leaves out of consideration the nomads from central and eastern Arabia who periodically descend into Mesopotamia. For all practical purposes the whole of the population is Arab. Jews, Christians, Persians, and Indians are largely represented in the towns of Baghdad, Kerbela, and Nejef, but the number engaged in agriculture is negligible. It, therefore, depends upon the Arab to make or mar irrigation in Mesopotamia. The nomad or Bedouin Arab may be left out of calculation at once, for he is universally regarded as irreclaimable. The Hadhar or settled Arab, however, is of quite another temperament, and from him may be expected the variety of enthusiasm engendered by inordinate love of money, but mitigated by incorrigible indolence. A fine labourer when he likes, the Hadhar Arab seldom does like to labour. He is what the Americans call "born tired," and the taller and stronger he grows the more tired he becomes, a condition due probably in great part to the excessive salacity which his creed encourages and his well-nourished body promotes. His environment is of course principally responsible for his attitude towards the question of work. A few weeks manual labour in which the women and children take a leading part, results in a food-supply for the whole year, the extraordinarily fertile soil giving a large return for small efforts in the shape of irrigation. Herds and flocks that require the attention of only a few naked babes



provide wool for clothing and milk for food. God is thus good to the Arab, and it would be a slight upon the Divine arrangements if he did a stroke of work more than was necessary to satisfy his simple wants. Such in great part is the material at hand for the development of this country.

Obviously, however, liberal allowance must be made for changes due to modified conditions. The rapacious government of the past gave no scope to individual effort. The man who wrought beyond the degree necessary to procure the mere essentials of existence was immediately robbed of the fruits of his labour, either by his own sheikh or by the tax-collector. Instead of incentive to work there was every discouragement. Given the immunity from extortion at which the present Government presumably aims, the Arab will surely develop a greater capacity for work than he is now endowed with. His numbers will increase, whereas they are now at a standstill owing to the terrible infant mortality. The semi-nomad life of a great proportion of the people, the fact that they wear practically the same clothes in winter and summer although the variation in temperature is extreme, and their entire ignorance of hygiene and medicine, all contribute to prevent natural increase. Fixity of tenure, security from extortion, provision of water at all seasons, will lead to permanent settlement, and result in those easier conditions under which mankind multiplies. But much water must flow under the bridge of boats at Baghdad before such things come to pass, and one cannot but regard the Arab as he is to-day as unfortunate in disposition and insufficient in numbers for the purposes of the economic development which it is sought suddenly to induce in this country. The limited amount of labour

required for the projects now in hand ought to be procured without much difficulty. But there is a danger that it may prove more expensive than is expected. The German Archæological Expedition working at Babylon get all the coolies they want at 6d. per head per day, but more inefficient labour it would be hard to conceive. Each man carries a small mat containing 8 lb. of earth at a pace that would make a snail indignant. If German organisation and perseverance can get no more out of these people it is not likely that others will be more successful. The thousand labourers now at work at the Hindia barrage are paid 10d. and 1s. per day, and it is not apparent that they do more work than their fellows at Babylon. It is a question whether 10,000 can be procured at the same rate, and even if they are, such a price compares very unfavourably with the small wages paid to Indian coolies. The low price of labour has been largely responsible for the development of irrigation in India, and it will greatly militate against the success of Sir William Willcocks' schemes here if it should prove necessary to tempt workmen by high prices, either because the inhabitants are lazy or because they are not sufficiently numerous.

If the cost of labour is to become a question in connection with the small projects now in hand, the recruiting of the five or ten times as many workmen as will be required to make material progress with the real irrigation scheme must present grave difficulty. Much bigger still is the question of settlers for the large area which it is proposed to irrigate. Deductions being made for the inhabitants of the towns, for the Jews and Christians who will not labour with their hands, for the many who have other work,



there will remain available a number sufficient, even if they were willing to forsake their present holdings, to settle only a fraction of the land reclaimed. Sir William Willcocks pins his faith to outsiders from Armenia, Kurdistan, Persia, Arabia, and India. He confidently hopes that people from all the surrounding countries will be attracted by the prospects of good, well-watered land on easy terms. It may be so, but one finds it hard to believe that people from the adjacent pleasant hill countries will be in a great hurry to descend into the Mesopotamian plains, and to endure the torrid heat of their summers, even though there be promise of profit. A well-known lady traveller said, during the discussion which followed Sir William Willcocks' recent lecture in London, that everybody in the Turkish Empire was short of a job. That may be true, but in regard to these regions it might be added with equal truth that it is everybody's ideal to have nothing to do. India may be left out of calculation, for the Turks would not welcome a large influx of Asiatics, subjects of a foreign power, and entitled to extra territoriality. Abolition of the Capitulations is, of course, a subject for the future, but the time for its discussion has not yet come. Altogether the population question may be regarded as a very large one, upon which nobody has a right to be dogmatic while there is so little to go upon. Nobody can say what the price of labour on a large scale is likely to be, or if people sufficient to settle great irrigated areas can be attracted to Mesopotamia. The experience of the next three years, gained during the carrying out of the projects now in hand, should prove invaluable, and should indicate with some degree of certainty the capacity of this country to undergo





*Two Systems of Irrigation on the Euphrates.*

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transformation. Estimates of profit and loss, without some such experience, are worth very little.

Sir William Willcocks includes a railway among his proposals for developing this country. He believes a railway advisable on the ground that a short-cut to the Mediterranean will serve commerce much more effectively than the sea route *viâ* the Persian Gulf. Indeed, the carrying out of his principal irrigation scheme entails the destruction of the waterway to the Persian Gulf, and makes the building of a railway imperative. This is a Napoleonic transition which will not appeal to sober-minded people. There is no denying the merits of the suggested railway or the shortcomings of the existing sea route. But the man who would advocate the scrapping of steamships because Mons. Bleriot crossed the Channel on an aeroplane would hardly be acclaimed as a well of wisdom. The proposal to utilise the water of the Tigris for irrigation, and to render the river unnavigable, would seem to be justifiable only when irrigation has attained such a pitch that its further development would be checked for lack of water. When that day dawns, and Mesopotamia is really regarded as one of the coming granaries of the world, the waterway may very well be sacrificed and the more efficient railway substituted. Meanwhile it would seem to be more in the interests of Mesopotamia to proceed experimentally with minor projects, the degree of whose success will furnish data upon which estimates may be formed of the prospects of more comprehensive schemes. Nor is it by any means assured that the proposed railway to the Mediterranean will afford a cheaper, though undoubtedly a quicker, means of transit. Railway charges for a distance of 550 miles can hardly come



to less than 20s. per ton, to which must be added another 10s. for freight to Western Europe. River freight to Bussorah, thence sea charges to Europe, may very well come to less. Indeed, at the time of my visit to Baghdad, freight to Bussorah was only 3s. per ton, and from Bussorah to London 19s., or a total of 22s. per ton. High freights down the Tigris in the past have been a consequence of the restricted number and size of the vessels, and of the difficulties of navigation. Improvement of the waterway and the employment of small tugs to tow large lighters would result in a great cheapening of charges, and a stable rate that should not exceed 5s. per ton. Large shipments would insure a 20s. rate, if not less, by the sea. Altogether the waterway is much more likely to afford the cheaper rate until the export trade has enormously expanded. It must always be remembered, too, that railway rates from Baghdad to the Gulf, if a railway were constructed, can never possibly compete with river rates, and that a great deal of the trade of a developed Mesopotamia must be with India. With that prospect in view, disappearance of the waterway to the Gulf cannot be contemplated without misgiving. The obvious policy is to devote study to the problem of how to employ the water of one river for irrigation while preserving that of the other for navigation. Efforts in this direction would meet with universal sympathy, whereas proposals to terminate navigation are generally regarded with suspicion.

The question of finance is one that can be more fitly discussed in a general review of Turkish affairs. It may here be observed, however, that Turkey, faced by the necessity for naval and military reorganisation and administrative reform, all requiring money, already has her hands full. Funds for the development

of Mesopotamia are highly desirable, but so are funds for a hundred other purposes. It is far from clear that the Government can meet out of revenue the expenditure to be incurred in the next three years upon Sir William Willcocks' projects now in hand. Extensive borrowing is for Turkey a recurring necessity in the future. Her credit is good, but limited. Probably no material progress in Mesopotamia will be possible without recourse to foreign financiers, and they are not likely to sink many millions of money in schemes about whose success there is any element of doubt without the hypothecation of tangible security, or without the assurance of the stability of the new *régime* which time alone can afford. One cannot help remarking that an endeavour to hurry things may lead to disappointment, perhaps to disaster. Sir William Willcocks has done magnificent work in arousing the interest of the Turkish Government and in stimulating them to action. Great benefit is likely to accrue from the enterprise of the Government, which, with praiseworthy promptness, provided the funds required to make a beginning. But in view of the financial position of the Empire and the social situation in Mesopotamia, there would appear to be a danger of straining the conditions. While experience is lacking of the extent to which this backward region will respond to nursing, the safer policy must be to progress by steps rather than by leaps and bounds.

## CHAPTER XXI.

## KERBELA.

AMONG the sights of Mesopotamia are the ruins of Babylon, and I gladly accepted the proposal of a good citizen of Baghdad to accompany me thither, by way of a round tour which should include a visit to the famous town of Kerbela and an inspection of the Hindia barrage. An Irish traveller in these regions expressed the desire to join us, and we accepted him in the belief that the contrast between his exuberance and the solemnity of the people we should encounter would afford us continual happiness. As courier, cook, and interpreter we decided to employ Shamu, reputed the best travelling servant in Asia, and an individual worthy of more than passing note, particularly as it happened that he eventually accompanied me throughout the remainder of my travels in Asiatic Turkey.

Shamu is a Christian of the Roman Catholic persuasion, and comes from the back of beyond, somewhere in the neighbourhood of the mountains of Kurdistan, where the Seven Churches of Asia, with their seventy and seven modern subdivisions, maintain the ancient Christianity in all its old-fashioned primitiveness. American missionaries have perverted sections of them to Congregationalism, while French monks have



drawn others into the fold of the Pope. Shamu is one of these latter, and devout enough when it suits him. He knows English of a rare kind, interspersed with Hindustani and complicated by abstruse references in the Arabic, Turkish, Kurdish, Persian, Armenian, and a few Caucasian languages. "Holy Smoke," said the Irishman, when he heard him first, "but phwat is the old divil saying?" There are many who know Shamu well who have often wished to interpret his husky, beard-bemuffled tones, but very few who have been able. He is a great traveller, and I have met him in Aleppo in one year and in Teheran the next, and now I ran across him again in Baghdad. He is a regular Ancient Mariner of the land, and what he does not know about the Middle East is not worth knowing. Perhaps I should say that there is no place in the Middle East where he has not been, but that he doesn't care a tinker's anathema for anything or anybody anywhere so long as his master for the time being is comfortable. It is said of him in Baghdad that when the world is burning for its sins Shamu will give Satan no rest until a cool place is provided for those gentlemen who employed him in a better climate. No man was ever born less tired than Shamu, despite the decadence of the people from which he has sprung. If ever there was an anachronism, he is one, for he is energy and sleeplessness personified among surroundings that are more lethargic than the grave.

Shamu made the way to Babylon clear in a few extraordinary sentences, punctuating each statement by a touch to his forelock, in an inimitable manner mingling respect with sturdy independence. There was nothing for us to do but name the day; he would arrange the business. All that he desired of us was

to be ready at the unearthly hour of three, and this we had to be content with, as Shamu is reported never to sleep when there is work in hand. When the appointed morning came his hoarse voice woke me from deep and dreamless slumber, and I cursed the moment when was born the idea of going to Babylon. But I got up all the same, for he would be a bold man who went back on his plighted word in the presence of Shamu. In five minutes my kit was rolled up and despatched on coolies to the starting-place. There were two miles to walk, and if we had been millionaires the matter could not have been differently arranged, for the carriages were on the other side of the river, and the law forbade them on the bridge of boats. Breakfastless I set forth in the dark along the dim and shadowy narrows of the city, asleep but for the dogs that slunk along the walls, growling to see mankind afoot at so unwonted a time. The watch-dogs in the compound of the Good Citizen received me furiously, and woke their master from hard-won rest. When he appeared it was to damn Shamu for his punctuality. The Irishman strayed in shortly afterwards, having been dragged from his bed by the same ruthless agency. Shamu marshalled his little flock, and led us onward by black, silent bazaars, through whose ragged ceilings could sometimes be seen a patch of star-lit firmament. In the centre of the town a few muffled Arabs strode solemnly along, wrapped to the eyes in their flowing cloaks—murderers all they looked in the gloomy night. At the corner where we turned out of the great bazaar into the lane that led to the bridge there was a tea-shop open, and a few miserable ones sat disconsolately on benches in a dirty yellow light that made one think of the catacombs. We passed out of a tall archway, and there



*The Bridge of Boats.*



*R.I.M.S. "Comet," Naval Guardship to the Baghdad Residency.*



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lay before us the broad Tigris, a band of glancing steel backed by impenetrable obscurity. The approach to the bridge was kept by a huge chain that stretched from side to side, and over the chain projected a dozen gaunt necks supporting as many horrid heads of silent chewing camels. They were empty beasts waiting for admission to the city, and for the loads they were to bear across the Arabian desert. They chewed on superciliously as we crept under their necks, and shoved past their evil-smelling bodies. On the bridge we looked back to see the leaning minarets cut black against the spangled heavens. Below the planking of the bridge the water, drained from the mountains of Asia Minor, gurgled against the pontoons on its way to the Indian Ocean. The woodwork creaked as the massive boats swung and joggled in the swift current, and the heavy iron chains that held them in line rattled and clanked and ground against their fastenings. The feet of a horse thundered along the echoing floor of the bridge, and an armed rider peered into our faces. It was strong drink to stand for a moment, in that mysterious light, on the ponderous floating thing upborne by waters whose fame stretches deep into the past, gazing over the sleeping city with the magic name, thinking of what has come and gone on the sombre banks that lay brooding in the night. The armies of Babylon and Assyria, of Greece and Parthia, of ancient Persia and the Arabia of Mahomet, the names of Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander, Xenophon, Harun-al-Rashid, Saladin, are inseparable from this dim scene, and from the land that lies hidden behind the surrounding walls of darkness. It seemed a very little thing to be a human being of to-day amid these memories of old.

From the bridge we plunged into the shadows of the

bazaars on the western bank, and soon afterwards came to a street where many people moved hither and thither by the light of dim lanterns. The jingling of harness and the shouts of mule-drivers was a relief from the silence behind, cheery sounds in a mysterious darkness. We were in the midst of the daily caravan for Kerbela, and surrounded on all sides by bewildered pilgrims bound for the holy places of the Shiah world. Nearly a score of strange boxes upon wheels blocked up the street, and Shamu said these were the carriages. To one, four beasts were already joined, the vehicle itself being filled with our baggage almost to the roof. We climbed in and took our places as best we might, stretched out full length over kit-bags and valises, rugs and overcoats. The driver took his place, Shamu crawled in behind, and our contrivance moved off amid a chorus of shouts and the advice of many. It was the signal for departure of the whole caravan. Being Sahibs, and a protection from evil-doers, we were allowed the place of honour—and least dust—in front.

Our carriage was a curious vehicle set high on not inefficient springs. The Good Citizen and self being seated forward were in comparative comfort, but the poor Irishman placed in rear by Shamu had a painful position. A Turkish road in far Mesopotamia is a thing of chance rather than engineering, and our conveyance rocked and swung like the last carriage in an express train. The Irishman was rattled about like a pea in a drum, his head bumped upon the roof, his elbows knocked on the side, his spine jarred by the shocks to his centre of gravity. In these circumstances he was at his very best, appealing in turn to all the saints in the calendar and to all the fiends of the Inferno. He alternately prayed the driver to be careful, and cursed him for a madman. With his head



stretched out of the window he described the road before us in tones of terror and horror, the while the four lusty mules trotted vigorously or galloped furiously. "There isn't room for a bicycle," he cried in agony, as the driver exhorted his animals into a canter over a broken bit of ground. And when once the two near wheels left the ground in an endeavour to capsize he sobbed out that he would sooner cross the Himalayas in an Irish "kyar" than stay a minute longer in such a "divil's cradle." In truth, it was a most dangerous progress, and even the Good Citizen insisted on continually clawing me violently, as if that would prevent an upset. Shamu took the irregularities philosophically, and only showed anxiety when our legs and feet became too active near a certain basket. "Got whisky-bottle," he observed significantly.

We halted at a roadside hamlet to change horses, and Shamu took possession of the only tea-shop. He pulled the benches into the street, opened out a great variety of provisions in tins and jars and old newspapers, made tea from a samovar, fried eggs and sausages, and then declared breakfast ready, all within five minutes. Before the tail carriage of the caravan had arrived we were hard at it, with a hundred pilgrims and the whole village looking on in wonder to see the Feringhis eat, and the number of things they required. The Good Citizen and self were consumed with modesty at being so exhibited, but the Irishman was delighted with the impression we were making. Waving a bit of bacon stuck on a fork comprehensively round the onlookers, he asked Shamu if they were hungry and would they like a taste. Shamu's reply fell on him like a thunderbolt—"Arab people eat pig, he go hell." It was new to the Irishman that what is good meat in Ireland is filthy in the East. "The

dhirty spalpeens ! that never saw the inside of a bucket of water," he roared ; " it's them that wants the irrigation badly, body AND sowl."

But for the crossing of the Euphrates the remainder of the day's journey was deadlly dull. Having changed animals three times we duly arrived at Kerbela, where we were hospitably received in the house of Mohsem Khan, the British Agent, a gentleman of Afghan descent, and very well informed upon local affairs, who proved most obliging in showing us the sights.

A stranger town than Kerbela could not well be conceived. Placed in the desert many miles from running water, there is an air of artificiality about it that is infinitely curious. The Euphrates left behind, the road runs across sand, unredeemed from barrenness by a blade of grass or any sign of vegetation, for a distance of about fifteen miles, when suddenly there stands Kerbela in an oasis marked off from the desert as distinctly as an island from the sea that surrounds it. It is a poor oasis too, for the channel bringing water from the great Hindia Canal, ten miles away, carries barely enough of the precious fluid to supply the wants of the inhabitants, leaving little for the nourishment of trees and crops. There is enough of green, however, to make the exquisite contrast between brazen desert and grateful shade ; and for the poor Persian pilgrim, weary after his thousand miles of rocks and stones, sand and dust, the tall minarets of the holy mosque, topping the thin fringe of trees that surround the town, must indeed be a blessed sight.

Here is buried Hussein, son of Ali, who was son-in-law to Mahomet himself. Hussein was barbarously murdered after the disastrous battle of Kerbela, fought in 680 against the enemies of his father. Ali, murdered twenty years before, lies buried at Nejef, fifty



miles to the south, and to visit the tombs of these the first two of the holy Imams, of whom the last, el Mahdi, will one day come to life again, and with his resurrection establish Islam throughout the world, is the ambition of all devout Shiahs, alive or dead. It is a pitiful sight to see them on the road, worn and travel-stained, young and old, male and female. Beaten upon by the weather, alternately the perishing cold of the Kurdish mountains and the unrelenting sun of the plains, and robbed and harassed by the harpies who from one end of the pilgrimage to the other bleed them of their small stores of money, these poor folk suffer all because of the faith that is in them. Of the old who make the journey all are prepared to die by the way, and few expect to return. All they ask of the Almighty is that they may have breath to carry them to holy ground. There they await the Angel of Death willingly, and perhaps with a welcome, for often there has just been enough money to bring the pilgrim to the goal, and none left to support him after arrival. In things religious the modern Christian would appear, indeed, to be a mere dilettante as compared with the disciple of Islam.

Into the mosque the unbeliever may not penetrate, and all that is vouchsafed him is a glimpse through the chain-crossed gateway that leads into the great courtyard. From the adjacent house-tops one obtains a good view of the huge building and its graceful minarets, but can see little of the fine tiles with which it is adorned at various points. Enormous wealth is stored up in the mosque, reputed the richest of all the Shiah shrines, its treasures having been brought out for inspection during a visit of Nasr-ed-Din Shah. For centuries the monarchs of Turkey, Persia, and India have vied in pouring in offerings to the tomb of the



departed saint, and the value of the gold and silver and precious stones now accumulated is incalculable.

In the town is a population of some 70,000 souls, of whom 60,000 are Shiahs, all aliens to the soil, Persian or Indian. The remainder are Arabs, with an odd Turk or two, and nowadays a few Jews and Christians, where once the place was too fanatical to hold any such. It has been everybody's ambition to be close to the great mosque, and the result is a town of high buildings, where in the Orient there is usually a wide area with low houses and interspersed with open spaces. But here the dwellings crowd tightly around the mosque, and as the circumference of the walls is limited, the people have built storey upon storey in their endeavour to keep within the holy radius. Space being precious, little room has been left for streets, and the result is a thick ring of piled-up buildings through which air and light can hardly pass, and underneath which the passer-by must crawl like a mole underground. In curious contrast to this congestion is the modern part of the town, a quarter where a recent Vali said there shall be no overcrowding. Here the few new streets are broad and comparatively of smooth surface, and run at right angles to each other. Their blank ugliness makes one long to dive again into the mysterious darkness of the old town, where box-like rooms protrude out of the walls, and where the narrow lanes are continually built over in the effort to utilise every available inch of space.

In Kerbela and Nejef dwell the holy Ulema who direct the spiritual affairs of Persia. There are three principal *mujteheds* and about a dozen lesser, besides thousands of small fry. The Persian Nationalists made great use of letters and declarations from these good

men during certain phases of their revolution, particularly in connection with the denunciation of the ex-Shah and his abhorred courtiers. In paying a visit to the leading *mujtehed* of Kerbela, therefore, I expected, at least, a warm commendation of the Constitutional movement, and of the patriots behind it. The holy man and his son, and several leading members of the Persian community, received our party with great politeness, and though they professed interest on hearing that I was fresh from Teheran, they evinced no desire to know the latest news. I tried hard to draw them into expressing any sort of opinion on the state of affairs in Persia, but elicited nothing beyond the barest platitudes. Eventually, I bade farewell to our hosts in the strong conviction that they knew little of what was happening in Persia, and that they cared less. They were like people who had other fish to fry, and who took small interest in what did not immediately concern them. Their principal business in life is to ease the conscience of the pilgrim—and, incidentally, his purse—so that his politics is a matter of merely academic interest to them. Considerable inquiry in regard to the share taken by the clergy of Kerbela and Nejef in events in Persia led me to the conclusion that the principal *mujteheds* have always declined to take sides, and that many of the numerous letters and pronouncements published broadcast throughout Persia during the last two or three years either emanated from lesser and irresponsible persons or were simply barefaced forgeries. Subsequent to the date of my visit, however, the Kerbela and Nejef clergy began to wake up to the fact that their ascendancy was being threatened, and it is understood that they are now definitely ranging themselves against the Constitutional movement.

Having seen the sights we were very glad to return to the hospitable house of Mohsem Khan, where a sumptuous meal had been prepared for us. Part of it was in native fashion, a huge basin of heaped-up rice, with dishes of dressed meat set around. The principal of these, on account of its resemblance to Irish stew, was immediately seized upon by the Irishman, despite the protests of Good Citizen and self and the dismay of our host. We pointed out that by the rules of a native dinner we were entitled to dip our fingers in the dish that he had annexed; but all the satisfaction we got was to hear him mumble between mouthfuls the ridiculous refrain about three blind mice and what was done to their tails. We contrived to do very well on the other things, however, and had the gratification, later in the night, of learning that our friend was suffering torments inside that only the bottle of whisky could alleviate. We sent back word that we and the whisky were of the same nationality and could not be parted; which gave rise to a reflection on the Scottish sense of humour that in the circumstances we could very well afford to endure.



## CHAPTER XXII.

## BABYLON.

SHAMU said that if we were to reach Babylon before dark on the following day we must make an early start. The old rascal woke us at two in the morning, and by three had us packed into a box similar to the one in which we had come, except that it had a permanent tilt to one side, and that the axis of each wheel differed materially. The Irishman was quite at home with these irregularities, having known conveyances of the kind from his youth upward, but the Good Citizen and I did not like it at all, and felt constrained to ask Shamu if he thought we should be safe. All the reply he would make was that God made the carriage, and the roads, and all the people in the world, and that we had nothing to do but get in and go to sleep. "When carriage fall down I wake master," was the only concession he would make to our fears!

It was pitch dark when we moved off, and the Good Citizen made the driver swear to stop when he came to the bridge. This structure crossed a canal, thirty feet wide and perhaps fifteen deep, in a very awkward manner for highly-strung temperaments. It rose in a high hump in the middle, had no parapets, and was just broad enough to hold the carriage wheels. Its

negotiation in daylight is a feat, at night a miracle. We plunged along the irregular street with only the star-light to guide the driver, and the Irishman at every bump apostrophised the saints and swore we were over. The Good Citizen expressed his feelings by clawing me, and by cursing the driver, Shamu, the mules, the carriage, the road, and the people who made it. Finally, Shamu ejaculated, "Got bridge," when a chorus of yells reminded the driver of his promise to halt. The Good Citizen got out. "I'm a bachelor," said the Irishman, "and by the Holy Potato I'm going to stay inside and chance it." When we were safely over, the Good Citizen got in and comforted us by observing that we were never likely again to be so near death without dying.

Violent emotion is a good soporific, and after our fright we all slept peacefully until the rising sun began to stream into our eyes. One of the first things we were conscious of was a jackal slinking away from a dead beast at the roadside. We all had our revolvers out in the twinkling of an eye, and the way that jack skedaddled from the fusilade that we poured upon him was a pleasure to behold. Two of the weapons were big Brownings, and they dusted up the ground about the flying beast until at five hundred yards he disappeared behind a sand-dune. The Irishman smacked his lips over this bit of sport, and said it reminded him of home in the ould days. A little further on it looked for a moment as if we were to have bigger game at which to shoot. We overtook a large camel caravan meandering along by the side of the track. On the road itself strolled a young camel-driver swinging a switch, with which, as we passed, he playfully flicked the legs of one of our servants, a Christian yclept Naomi, which hung out of the back of the carriage.

Naomi caught the switch from the man's hand and smartly whacked him over the back with it. This interchange of pleasantry was resented by the camel-man, and he pulled our domestic out of the carriage. The two were left standing in the middle of the road glaring at each other, and poised to strike. We stopped sharply, and Shamu jumped out and ran up to the swashbuckler, caught him by the arm, and glared and growled in his face like an old bull-dog. The man promptly shook him off and shouted to his companions. In a second there were a dozen camel-drivers running up, all armed with ancient guns, swords, pistols, and bludgeons. Shamu and Naomi retired towards the carriage in some haste, and the onus of protection was suddenly thrust upon us three unfortunate foreigners bottled up in the carriage and unable to move for the baggage that surrounded us. The Good Citizen told the driver to get on, and then shouted friendly chaff at the excited camelmén. The sight of three Europeans in the carriage checked them for a moment, and then we were off at a canter, half expecting a volley, but carefully keeping our own weapons out of sight lest they should provoke an attack. Camel-drivers are lawless fellows, and frequently fight among each other, while robbery is at all times congenial to them.

We reached the Euphrates without further adventure, and in the course of time Shamu chartered a boat to take us down the river. Our object was to sail along the Euphrates to the mouth of the Hindia Canal, there to visit Sir William Willcocks' engineers and to inspect the barrage upon which work was busily proceeding, whereafter, if there was water enough in the Euphratus, to float down to Babylon and cast ourselves upon the mercy of the German



archæologists settled there. There were lots of boats at Musayib when we arrived, but no demand for them. Their owners had earned nothing for days, and were eating their heads of. Anywhere else freights would have been cheap, and for natives freights would have been low, for the native would just have sat on his heels until the price went down, the boatmen knowing very well that time is no object with their own fellow-countrymen. But when the Feringhi comes along all the world knows that his headlong progress must not be arrested. He must have his heart's desire at the moment of its birth, or play the caged lion, to the discomfort to all around. And so the simple Arab boatman makes him pay extra—for all the days of idleness past—for days of idleness to come—for the past, present, and future idleness of his brethren who abstain from entering into competition. This may be bad economics, but it is very satisfactory business. The Arab loves any sort of bargain that involves a maximum of return for a minimum of labour. The instinct of the unemployed is strong within him, and if ever Mesopotamia becomes an industrial country there will always be more people out of work than in it.

There is great attraction to the human mind in the prospect of taking ship upon a river, and swiftly and silently passing the changing scenes of natural beauty and human enterprise that find place upon its banks. There is all the charm of panorama and the variety of kaleidoscope, while the gentle movement and the thought of being afloat provoke a pleasant sense of anticipation. Our vessel upon the broad Euphrates was a roomy country boat with ample space for our baggage and our servants, as well as for the crew of four long-legged, shapely Arab lads. Our bedding, arranged amidships to form seats and lounges, invited

comfortable ease, while smoke from the bows and the clatter of dishes intimated that Shamu realised we had not yet breakfasted. After the hard seats and eternal bumping and pitching of the abominable vehicle that had brought us from Kerbela to the riverside, this dreamy method of travel was infinitely satisfying, and when the meal that we had craved for the past two hours actually was set before us, there was surely no man alive that any one of us envied. "'Tis a taste of Paradise," said the Irishman as he smeared mustard upon a forkful of pink ham.

Eating over and smoking commenced, we had leisure to inspect the country. We soon came to the conclusion, aided by a hot sun and stifling air, that it was flat, stale, and unprofitable. Our speed was a bare two miles an hour, and the boatmen showed no inclination to accelerate our progress by artificial means. Occasionally we passed a clump of date-palms situated on the bank and surrounding a miserable mud hut. There were fields on either side, and every now and then we passed wheels where men and animals were busily engaged in hoisting the water to the level of the land. But the monotony was overwhelming, while the sun got hotter and hotter as the day waxed. We exhorted our Arabs to row, but the sight of their flaccid efforts made us more tired than the heat. We were very thankful to enter the long reach at the end of which the river divides, part flowing down the original bed of the Euphrates to Babylon, while the great bulk of the water follows the course of the Hindia Canal.

We now disembarked and tramped along the low embankment that skirts the river, and soon reached the scene of Sir William Willcocks' labours. There are here two schemes in hand, one the completion of the barrage, of which I have already written, and



the other the construction of a second barrage, upstream of the first, intended to divide the strain of holding up the water. On the latter a thousand or so of Arabs are engaged, and when we came upon them we were interested to observe that while a few were working the majority were engaged upon what looked like military manœuvres preceding a battle. Several closely-packed companies of men were marching up and down, turning sharp right and left, suddenly shooting backward or forward, but all moving in a solid mass in perfect time. Their steps and springs were accentuated by loud shouts and warlike singing. Some of the companies had spears and flags. A young Bulgarian engineer whom we encountered explained that they were only playing themselves. We asked why they were not working, and we understood him to say that this was the Arab idea of work, and that if they were not allowed to do it their own way they would do nothing at all. To get to the chief engineer we had to cross to the point of land which divided the two streams, and while we were being ferried across several hundreds of the workmen came to watch the process. It was wonderful to see what an interest they took in anything outside their task. Sir William's right-hand man turned out to be a retired Indian canal official, who occupied a pleasant tent and kept refreshment for visitors. He explained how the plan for the new barrage entailed the construction of a ring of embankment which should isolate the work from the danger of flood. The embankment complete, the masonry could be proceeded with throughout the time of high water, and when the barrage was ready the present course of the river would be diverted through the barrage, and the present impact on the existing barrage—now burst, as already recorded—reduced by half.



It sounded very simple. One wonders how it will work out in practice.

Having wished our host luck we rejoined our boat, and commenced the voyage down the old bed of the Euphrates, literally the waters of Babylon. At this time of the year, as a rule, the channel is perfectly dry, but the high water then prevailing, together with the fact that the barrage, though burst, does tend to raise the level and force water along the original bed, resulted in a sluggish stream about two feet deep upon which our boat was wearily borne. After much persuasion we induced our boatmen to do some work. One of them got out a long pole and began lazily to push the bottom. The resulting impetus to the boat was next to nothing, but the roll conferred upon her was enough to sicken a cat. We all got out and walked. Then the poling stopped. Half a mile of rough marching and continual jumping over *bunds* and irrigation canals, in the heat of the afternoon, satisfied our aspirations for exercise, and we returned to the boat. Then we had tea. Then we smoked, and presently the sun waned and the chill of evening was upon us. All the while the banks were intensely monotonous, with here and there a clump of date-palms and an occasional water-wheel. As it grew cooler the diligent husbandman came forth with his animals to work the water, and the air was soon full of the heartrending wails of the reluctant, greaseless axles. Oh! how they sighed and moaned and yelled in melancholy cadence. One looked for signs of ancient Babylon, but nothing on these mild and lonesome banks suggested the nearness of one of the world's great places of old.

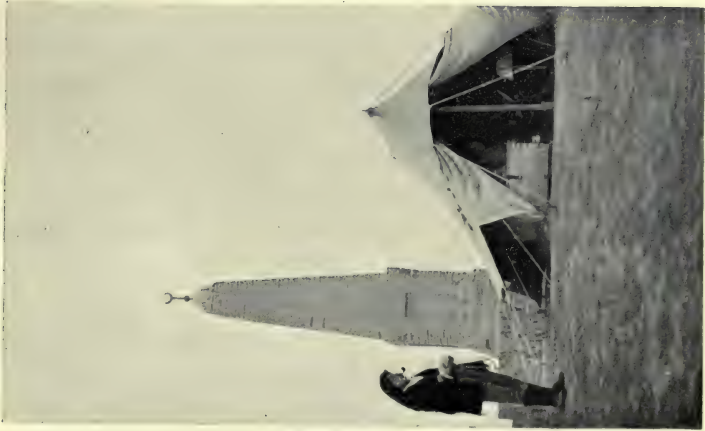
Then dusk crept over us, and silence, with only the bumping of the pole on the boat's gunwale and the mysterious noises of the water-wheels to disturb the

flight of thought. We could hardly see the banks, and floated we knew not whither. We were afraid of passing Babylon in the darkness, foolish though it was to think that Babylon could be passed unnoticed. Shamu raised his voice and shouted to the banks, "*Abu cherad! Abu cherad!* have we come to the place of the mad Feringhis that dig in the ground?" But the father of the water-wheel said we must go on yet awhile. How still it was. The man with the pole now sat perched in the stern of the boat, a dark shadow behind the red ray of a cigarette. His fellows had nothing to say, and only old Shamu waked the echoes with his plaintive call, "*Abu cherad! Abu cherad!* where is the place of Babil? Oh! where is Babil?" And there floated across the waters—"Patience, oh! children of the boat, for Babil is nigh." And so the walls of darkness slowly defiled past us, they in solemn movement, we seemingly suspended over a pool of liquid black. Thus, in eerie mystery, we navigated the waters of Babylon down to her very gates. For lights appeared, and shouting passed between boat and shore. Flaming torches were sent to meet us and light the place of landing. Our craft slid upon a sandbank, and brawny shoulders carried us ashore. Babylon was all around us, and we set our feet on sacred soil in a proper spirit of respect, thankful to think, at least, that our strange approach had not been out of keeping with the glamour that surrounds this place of ancient wonders.

From the mysterious darkness outside we suddenly found ourselves within a brilliantly lighted dining-room, where we were cordially received by the hospitable members of the German Expedition, the head of which, Professor Koldeway, needs no recommendation from me, for his name is a household word wherever the glories of the ancient East inspire interest.



"... the Waters of Babylon, ..."



Shamu.



TO THE  
LIBRARY OF  
CONGRESS

Our first experience of Babylon thus was pleasant human intercourse lubricated by foaming lager-beer straight from the banks of the Rhine. And when we were in the middle of dinner and the second bottle graced the table, the Irishman drank the health of our hosts, and swore by St Patrick that he would sooner be in Babylon in German company than in Connemara at the wedding of a Princess. For the morrow we were promised an inspection of the excavations and explanation of the wonders dug from the bowels of the earth, and went to bed early, warning Shamu that if he disturbed us before the sun was high in heaven his life would be forfeit.

If there be any reader who expects from me an archæological disquisition on the ruins of ancient Babylon he will be disappointed. The dreary mounds are full of interest for those who understand, and even for the layman. The sight of the massive brick walls, of the strange and cunningly worked relief figures which they present, of the gigantic stone bull that stands alone in a great trench, is both awesome and wonderful. Four thousand years is a big stretch for the human mind, and it is difficult satisfactorily to oneself to bridge such a gap in time. Despite which there were some little things that seemed to make the connection between long ago and present times close enough. Certain great blocks of cement are marked with a curious and familiar pattern, which, explained, turns out to be the facsimile of the straw matting upon which these blocks were set to dry before being burnt, matting that evidently was precisely the same as that made to this day in the surrounding country. Between the blocks of cement are layers of a dark substance, like the asphalt of modern streets. It is, in fact, the pitch with which Noah caulked the Ark,

found at Hit on the Euphrates not far away, and in universal use in Mesopotamia to the present day.

But what took my fancy at Babylon more almost than anything else was the sight of Professor Koldewey, no longer in his first youth, careering over the mounds in a perambulator excited to violent motion by a motor-bicycle attached. The mounds go up and down in shapeless heaps, and they are traversed here and there by narrow twisting footpaths made by the diggers passing to and fro. The Professor, finding himself in the heat of summer not so spry in getting about, indented on Germany for this Shaitan to assist him in inspecting the work at various points. To see him dashing over hillocks and round corners at twenty miles an hour, over ground that would make a goat careful, gave me more emotion than I had known in the previous twelve months. To hear the rat-tat-tat of that little motor-engine echoing among the walls of the Temple of Ishtar and in the depths of the Tomb of Nebuchadnezzar seemed enough to make the latter worthy turn in his grave. If somebody does not put water in the Professor's petrol he will surely break his neck and necessitate burial in the ruins whose excavation has been the work of his life. News of his pulverisation I shall never be surprised to hear.

The Germans occupy a pleasant house, specially built for the use of the Expedition, overlooking the bed of the Euphrates. It was curious to observe the condition of the latter, only two or three feet below the level of its banks and merely a shallow trench perhaps 150 yards wide, on one side of which was the film of water upon which we had descended, and which ran completely dry two days later. Yet Herodotus describes a huge city cut in two by a magnificent river, whose banks were lined with quays





*Residence of the German Archæological Expedition at Babylon, overlooking  
the old bed of the Euphrates.*



*Professor Koldewey and his Shaitan among the mounds of Babylon.*

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and wharves. It is difficult to-day to imagine anything of the kind ever having existed here. As for the area attributed to Babylon by the same ancient historian, some two hundred square miles, I understand that it is now accepted that the space occupied by the city in its most flourishing days was never more than about ten square miles. The lines of the ancient walls are clearly discernible in the desert, and do not suggest a particularly large town. Besides which the excavations indicate that much of the area enclosed must have been open ground. Probably the whole picture of the ancient civilisation and grandeur of these regions, painted for us by the *savants* of the past generation, will be found on closer examination to have been greatly exaggerated. Multiplication in size and number was the special gift of the historian of old, and the more his records are examined, the more inaccurate they sometimes prove to be in important respects.

Shamu had his will of us on the second morning, and up we had to get at three of the clock. If the long drive back to Baghdad was to be accomplished in daylight there was no other course open but an early start. Our hospitable German hosts insisted on getting up to see us off, and grateful indeed we were to them for the comfortable manner in which they bestowed us, and for the great trouble they took to explain to our untrained perceptions the marvels rescued from the depths of oblivion.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

BY CARAVAN.

FROM Baghdad it was my intention to journey by way of the Euphrates, past the place where Noah built the Ark, for a distance of some 300 miles, and then to wheel left and cross the desert to Tadmor in the Wilderness, and from there to proceed to Damascus. My object principally was to follow the route of the railway delineated by Sir William Willcocks, and incidentally to see the many places of interest on the road. From Damascus it would be easy to run up to Aleppo and visit those kind Christies who two years before had been my good Samaritans. To follow there was Syria and the Lebanon, the blue Mediterranean, Constantinople the Beautiful, the troubled Balkans, with home, sweet home at the end of all. A bonny programme, not too dull and not too exciting, and just the thing for the time of life when the figure begins to cause anxiety. My proposed route, of course, did not coincide with the views of the unimaginative muleteer, and the question of transport proved difficult. Animals turned out to be exceedingly scarce, and the only thing that would make them plentiful was fine gold in large quantities. When at last a bargain was struck I found that the sum paid in advance was employed

DAIRY OF  
CALIFORNIA



*A Gable of the old British Residency at Baghdad.*

UNIV. OF  
CALIFORNIA



by the muleteer actually to buy the beasts that he had already hired to me! If one took the East and its ways seriously, I am sure there would be no other refuge in life but death.

I engaged the redoubtable Shamu to accompany me to Syria, and he was not long in springing upon me that a Christian Lady of Baghdad wished to join our caravan. A glance at his face revealed nothing but impenetrable stolidity; he just looked the husband of a large wife and the father of his sixteen children—for to this extent has Shamu overloaded his quiver. Explanations brought forth that the Lady was to be escorted by an uncle, a suggestion of youthfulness that in my impressionable mind conjured the beautiful dark eyes that continually flash upon one in the narrow streets of Baghdad, either half-veiled by enveloping mantillas or dimly seen from behind the bars of upper windows. The Christian Lady, anyhow, would be a pleasant change from the dour-faced men of whom one gets so tired during a long journey; so I consented to her coming, and laid in a stock of chocolate, a confection reputed, all the world over, to promote good feeling between the sexes. My preparations for a start, then, were made with a sense of anticipation not usually associated with the enterprise of travel.

Shamu had me out of bed at three o'clock on the morning of the 5th March. By four I had breakfasted, bidden farewell to the kind friends who had lodged me so comfortably, and was tramping through the cavernous darkness of the bazaars to the bridge of boats. Shamu had preceded me with the baggage, so that the caravan might be ready when I arrived. My guide, after leading me across the bridge, lost his way in the dark lanes, and we were some time in discovering the starting-point. When we did the caravan had already

departed, and with it the Christian Lady and her uncle. But there remained a large crowd of fancily dressed girls and women who had come to see them off. Silks and satins, laces and muslins, laughing and talking—how gay it all seemed in the grey of the morning! But I noticed that the warm Baghdad complexions and the rich dark eyes of the Orient stood the early light better than would have those of my own country at a similar hour. Shamu, on a fawn-coloured mule with preposterous ears, held my nag by the rein, and we were soon speeding after the caravan, followed by a gendarme deputed by the authorities to protect me from evil. Just as we cleared the town the sun came out, and touched with gold the topmost point of a strange-built monument standing close by the road. Here lies the sweet wife to Harun-al-Rashid, Zobeide, a name sacred throughout the East. Sleeping amid enchanted memories, the Queen, from her resting-place, overlooks the home of her youth, palm-girt Baghdad, cloven by its silver river. Here I rein up my beast on a ruined wall and take my last look behind. City of Dreams, farewell! for I shall never see thee more.

We were soon in sight of the caravan, and it was easy to spot the female figure by the white headgear that fluttered in the wind. The Christian Lady was there right enough, and as we advanced I was filled with curiosity to see the damsel at close quarters. As we drew nigh Shamu pointed to a muffled horseman who lagged behind, and explained that this was the uncle—tired already, I thought. But he turned, and to my surprise disclosed the beardless face of a callow youth, who respectfully bade me good morning.

“Is this the Christian Lady’s uncle?” I sternly demanded of Shamu.

“Yes, sir; yes, sir,” grunted the old man.



"No, sir ; no, sir," interjected the uncle, "the lady is my aunt, and I am her nephew."

I turned a withering look upon Shamu, who rode on unconscious of offence. The uncle added, in an aside to me—

"Shamu's English is not very good, and he gets mixed between aunts and uncles, and nephews and nieces."

That explained it, of course, I thought with some bitterness. There was now no occasion to hurry forward, for my dream was dashed to the ground. An aunt would fulfil none of my vague longings for community of soul through the medium of dark pools of liquid light. And when I passed the kind-faced old body perilously perched upon her heap of bedding, I vowed for the future to keep my imagination in chains.

Six hours out from Baghdad Shamu and I halted for lunch and to change guards. The man with us gave water to his horse, drank a cup of coffee at the *khan*, and prepared to mount. It looked as if he were forgetting his bakshish, the ten piastres without which I had never heard of a *zaptieh* leaving a traveller. I told Shamu to pay him the money, but was astonished to hear that he declined to accept it. His reason was that he was getting full pay from the Government and had orders not to accept presents. He had no need of them now! At that moment I might have been knocked down with a feather. Was the millennium upon us, or was there some awful catastrophe impending, that a Turkish gendarme refused good coin? There were many onlookers, and I cast my eyes around for an explanation. But none was forthcoming. All faces were blank. The fact was as much beyond their comprehension as the cause of movement in the universe.



Shamu looked at me with the air of a conjurer who has performed an amazing deed of legerdemain, and astonished himself as well as his audience. Time alone could develop an understanding of this strange phenomenon.

Our way had hitherto traversed the soft alluvium of a deltaic region, flat as the palm of one's hand and as desert as the Sahara of habitation or cultivation. But wild barley was growing thinly on the rich soil, suggesting its fertility if properly irrigated. One has always to remember in this country that the finest ground is barren without water. Here the rainfall in winter just furnishes enough moisture to induce spasmodic bursts of coarse vegetation. At the first touch of midsummer sun the ground is burnt dry as a bone. One recognises the alluvium partly by the noticeable fact that never a stone, big or small, is to be found in it, and partly because of its unbroken level. But we now came upon a series of undulations so low that they would have escaped observation but for the gravel by which they were thickly covered. That woke one to the fact that here was the old coast-line once laved by the waters of the Persian Gulf. Where the gravel lay was original mother earth, where was nothing stony was the soft mud deposited thousands of years ago by the silt-laden floods of the Tigris and Euphrates.

It was curious to realise that the pushing back of the sea probably did not take place so very long ago. At that point we were barely 350 miles from the head of the Persian Gulf, while not much more than half-way lie the ruins of Eridu, a city discovered by archæologists to belong to the earliest period of Sumerian history, to which the sea is supposed to have extended about the year B.C. 3000. Here has been found a temple dedicated to Enki, god of the deep, while the town has been

described in cuneiform literature as standing "on the shore of the sea." Eridu<sup>1</sup> was built on the edge of the Arabian desert facing water, where is now solid dry land, and may be located on the map a little to the west of the modern town of Nasriyeh. If the deductions made by archæologists are correct, the rate at which the waters of the Persian Gulf are retiring before the encroachment of the land is astonishing, and suggests that the spot upon which Baghdad now stands must have been under water ten to fifteen thousand years ago, and the whole of Babylonia blue sea. What a blessed thing it would be if we could foresee the reverse operation happening to certain parts of the world—in slightly quicker time.

A conspicuous landmark on our road was the ruined mound of Akkar Kuf, the remnant of some mighty Babylonian building as yet untouched by the archæologist. It overlooks the depression of the same name, where at present is a small lake, which Sir William Willcocks desires to turn into a reservoir from which to feed the great irrigation canal already discussed. Hereabouts we crossed the remains of several of the canals of ancient times, and were interested to observe that their beds were several feet above the level of the surrounding plain, evidently due to the gradual deposit of silt by the slow-flowing water. It is to obviate this difficulty that Sir William Willcocks proposes to let the muddy floods from the Tigris and Euphrates clear themselves in the Akkar Kuf depression, so that clean water may flow into his great canal.

After a weary day of twelve hours in the saddle we arrived at the village of Feluja, where close by is the battlefield of Cunaxa, on which Cyrus the Younger was slain by his brother King Artaxerxes Mnemon two

<sup>1</sup> 'A History of Sumer and Akkad.'



thousand three hundred years ago. Feluja is just off the alluvium, and stands on comparatively elevated ground overlooking the Euphrates. It is connected with the right bank by an extremely rickety bridge of boats, which at nightfall was closed to traffic by removal of some of the boats. The reason for this was explained by an English engineer from Constantinople who came to call upon me at three o'clock in the morning, and when, astonishing to relate, I was up and dressed, thanks to the ruthlessness of Shamu. The Turks were engaged in military operations against the Delaim Arabs, a large and wealthy tribe settled more or less on the left bank of the Euphrates in this latitude. Descending upon them from the north, the Turkish general had driven the rebels upon the river, which they could not cross, as he had secured all the boats and closed all the bridges, and was daily expected to force a battle in the neighbourhood.

Having crossed the Euphrates at Feluja, another long day of ten hours brought us to Ramadi, where I found an encampment of Sir William Willcocks' engineers, who on the morrow were to commence work upon the Habbania escape, another of the interesting schemes of which I have already written. In the caravanserai at Ramadi I encountered one of the queerest parties it has ever been my lot to meet in outlandish places. It was composed of two Chinese youths accompanied by their wives, and not one of the quartette could speak a word of either Turkish or Arabic. They were bound for Constantinople, and were stranded here for lack of money. As nobody could communicate with them the authorities did not know what to do about the matter, but as they could speak a few words of Hindustani I was able to come to the rescue. A Turkish officer agreed to find them transport to a town



several days ahead, and I contributed a trifle, which, added to what they had, would take them to Syria. There they would have to get further assistance. They appeared to have come from the interior of China to Shanghai, then to Calcutta and Bombay, and finally to Baghdad. Now they were making overland for the Turkish capital, and all they had to guide them was an old English school atlas! Upon the grimy pages of this they traced their route, and explained with much volubility—in Chinese—what their objects were. Their Hindustani was terrible to follow, and one expression they continually used—*lail galley*—beat me entirely for a long time. Then I suddenly remembered that the Chinaman cannot pronounce the letter “r,” but uses “l” instead. And so I discovered that their favourite expression was “*rail gharri*” (Hindustani for railway), and felt myself a regular Sherlock Holmes in consequence. They wanted to reach the railway shown on their map as running from Constantinople to Aleppo—my old friend the Baghdad Railway, somewhat previously included by an optimistic draughtsman—and as their atlas was on an extremely small scale they thought it looked an easy business to travel from Baghdad to Aleppo. They were finding it rough work, I am afraid, but continued in ardent spirits. Heavens! what a dull dog the Arab seemed beside these eager little fellows, with their faces full of sparkling intelligence. They seemed grateful enough for my help, and the two nice-looking young women who hovered somewhere behind smiled at me in a sympathetic manner. Remembering my warning in the case of the Christian Lady, however, I made no attempt to pursue the acquaintance, though, doubtless, I could have bought one of the wives for a mere song. Women are cheap in China, and slavery is not prohibited in Turkey.

The compound of the *khan* was a fascinating place. Surrounded on three sides by two-storied buildings, the upper rooms in which I lodged looked over the space below, where I could see, unobserved, all that went on. It was full of soldiers in addition to the usual crowd of travellers. The former seemed quiet and well-behaved, and were evidently tired after a long ride. They were cavalry patrolling the western bank of the river, and were having a lively time owing to the probability that the Delaims would endeavour to escape the troops by crossing. But what interested me most were the animals—camels, horses, mules, donkeys, and cats. These beasts, I need hardly observe, are full of individuality, and there were moments as I watched the doings of those below me when I thought some of them would surely talk.

One lot of four small donkeys was grouped round a basket filled with forage. I don't think a tiger or a railway-train or a dynamite explosion would have attracted their attention from the business in hand. They ate as if the stability of the universe depended on their efforts. But you should have seen them when a wandering beast of their own species poked his nose into the basket and joined in the feast. They did not wait to explain that he had not been invited, but went for him like hyenas, teeth, heels, and voices, so that the intruder left with a suddenness I have never seen surpassed. That wandering donkey made several ineffective attempts to get a free meal, and finally lifted up his voice and brayed, and brayed, until it seemed as if the heavens must crack. Then an Arab who had been leisurely watching proceedings from a distance came up, led the donkey to his own place and reluctantly produced the beast's nose-bag. He had been hoping his animal would get a feed at somebody else's expense, but was now disappointed.



The owner of a certain camel, however, had better luck. His beast was allowed to wander about, and in due time came to a place where certain brethren were busy in the old familiar way. He joined himself to them and nobody said him nay. The camel is either hospitable or stupid, and the outsider had a quarter of an hour's guzzling before the owner of the other camels appeared and drove him off with kicks and curses. But luckily this beast came to a sack of grain standing with its mouth invitingly open, so he set to with renewed vigour and continued until the sack was appreciably smaller. Then a mule-driver came up, stood spellbound for a moment, then launched himself at the robber like a stone from a catapult. Burning and corrosive words smoked in the air for quite a space, to the unspeakable enrichment of my Arabic. I followed that camel for some time, and he went from place to place with an intelligence that was almost human. But he made one mistake, and that was when he tried to get at the provender upon which the four donkeys were engaged. He stood far back and from a height suddenly dropped his great head slap into the middle of the basket. The transition from peace to passion was instantaneous. The efforts of the short-legged little beasts to kick the huge animal were inexpressibly ludicrous, while biting was equally ineffectual, as the camel just lifted his head out of reach and stood looking down amicably upon them. Then the most fiery of the little fellows reared up on his hind legs and bit like a fury at the hanging lip of the interloper. He drew blood, too, and the owner of the lip lolloped off in great surprise.

The caravanseraï cat, however, is the devil personified for cunning. By day he is the sleekest and most inoffensive beast in the world, but at night he becomes



a veritable vampire. Shamu and I are both old birds in the matter of looking after property, but we were continually being defeated by the cats. At Ramadi Shamu put half a chicken between two plates and tied a kitchen duster round them with two knots. Then he put the bundle on a high shelf. During the night I was disturbed by a crash, but did not get up as the noise was followed by silence. But in the morning we found that the bundle had been knocked down from the shelf, the duster gnawed off, and the chicken devoured. To divert attention from this calamity Shamu began explaining to me how clever the cats were. He said he once put a leg of mutton in a box and locked it, but during the night the mutton was stolen by a cat. I asked him how in the world had the cat got into the box, and he replied that it was because he had forgotten to take the key out of the lock.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

## THE EUPHRATES VALLEY.

SIX hours out from Ramadi on the third day we halted at the ruined *khan* of Abouryat, where I decided to pass the night, despite the imperfect condition of the walls and the sky that showed through the roof. Our presence induced others to patronise this deserted spot, and a few oddments were soon gathered together, their beasts and fires and spreaded carpets causing the air of desolation to vanish, not altogether in accordance with my wishes, for I had hoped for a silent place in which to overcome arrears of work.

A troop of cavalry stopped for an hour or two to rest their horses, and the officer was pleased to sample my coffee and cigarettes. But the people who hampered me most were two men with three she-donkeys. They commenced arguing from the moment of their arrival, and waxed hotter and hotter as the evening advanced, until at last I was forced to ask Shamu to explain the reason of the commotion. It appeared that our muleteer had a very fine donkey whose attentions were wanted by the two men for one of their animals. Our muleteer declined to accede to this proposal on the ground that his beast had a

long journey to make and that it would not do to tire him beforehand. This was deemed the height of meanness by the owners of the other donkey. They desecanted till late with ever increasing volubility upon the consequences, financial to themselves, physiological to their donkey, if her needs were not complied with. But all to no purpose, for our fellow was inexorable. In the morning I discovered that all the disturbance had gone for naught, for our donkey had taken the law into his own hands during the night, with the consequence that all parties were satisfied—except the owner of the miscreant, who used bitter words far into the day.

Another short day brought us to Hit, a lurid place, and known to the Arabs as the Mouth of Hell. To the Christian it is a spot of supreme importance, for here it was that Noah got the pitch for the Ark that saved mankind from destruction in the Deluge. On the southern side is a mound covering the ruins of an old town, as yet unsubjected to excavation. The present village is perched upon the top of a rock which commands on one side the Euphrates, and on the other the plain, where sulphur and brimstone and smoke combine to justify the old Arab appellation. Salt and sulphurish water emanate from the soil and cover the surface with white and yellow incrustations. Everywhere the bitumen lies in black patches where it has exuded from the ground. The evil-smelling gases that accompany these foul discharges from the bowels of the earth load the atmosphere. To give a touch of the demoniac to so much unsavouriness and unsightliness, the use of the bitumen for burning lime results in columns of heavy black smoke that ascend in the still air and darken the firmament.

Closer inspection increases the impression of con-



THE  
EUPHRATES  
AND  
THE  
TIGRIS



*" . . . the miscreant . . . "*



*The Euphrates.*

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nection with the Pit. In a black hole in a heap of rocks we inspected a gang of men securing the output of a bitumen spring. The stuff oozes out in a horrid, brown, oily rope, that every now and then gives place to a fierce rush of gas and water. One man stands up to his knees in the warm black liquid—when it spouts out very hot he jumps away with remarkable alacrity—and gathers the slimy muck into sticky masses, which pass from hand to hand until deposited in a reservoir above the hole. Baling of the filthy water is continuous. The brown bodies of the workers, stripped naked but for an apology for a loin-cloth, are streaked with black, their long hanging locks are dishevelled by the continual bending, while their faces, black with sweat and grime, adorned with flashing white teeth and bloodshot eyes, give them a Satanic appearance that is truly awful. We were besieged by wild creatures who wished to guide our footsteps, to show the dirty sights and to take us to the most smelly places, and they clamoured unceasingly for bakshish. I was thankful to meet a couple of Turkish officers, whose share in the operations against the Delaims had brought them to Hit, engaged in looking over the springs, for I had a feeling that the loathsome people who haunted the place would not be above forcible robbery if the opportunity offered.

Hit is frequently mentioned in ancient inscriptions as “Ihi of the bitumen,” and its filthy products appear in ancient times to have been even in greater demand than they are to-day throughout the deltaic regions. Hit also has its place in the Scriptures, for it is supposed to be identical with the Ahava where Ezra mustered the expedition he led from Babylon to Jerusalem. It is also the point from where the Baghdad camel post to Damascus leaves the beaten



track for the limitless desert. Foreigners occasionally accompany the post, but generally find a single experience of this laborious journey sufficient to last a lifetime. The inhabitants of Hit were considerably excited at the time of my passing through because of the prospect that part of the Turkish forces would cross the river and camp in the neighbourhood. A Turkish army is no light visitor, and chickens and sheep and stores of grain usually suffer from its presence. But the most we saw was a party of cavalry bringing in three prisoners who had robbed the Aleppo post. They were wild-looking fellows, and it was more pleasant to meet them handcuffed and surrounded by guards than loose in the desert.

At Hit our party was joined by Lieutenant Fowle (40th Pathans), a young Indian officer engaged in the study of Arabic, and now bound for Damascus with the object of seeing something of the country. We travelled together next day, and in eight hours came to Baghdadadi, a place blessed with nothing but an old *khan* and the neighbourhood of the brimming Euphrates. Here a domestic event of some interest occurred outside my door—doorway I should say, for there was no actual door. An Arab mare suddenly presented her owner with a long-legged mouse-coloured foal that showed extraordinary vitality. Within an hour of his appearance he was walking about, very drunkenly to be sure, but with a determination that augured well for the future. The mother took very little interest in her son, even when he fell down, and we were all allowed freely to scratch his back and pull his ears and rub his nose, attentions which the funny little beast treated with unconcern. It was curious to note the feeling aroused in the caravanserai. Hard old Shamu mentioned the matter to

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EUPHRATE



*Water-wheels on the Euphrates.*



me, smiling introspectively as he did so, proof that his sixteen experiences had not blunted the parental instinct. People who passed my doorway where I sat writing, on the way to have another look at the mother and child, grinned apologetically at me, as if to say that of course it was silly to be interested, but that after all it was a human weakness. There were people there who would have robbed or murdered without a thought, and yet they were tamed and humanised by the sight of that helpless, trembling, inexpressibly unsophisticated little creature with its large limpid eyes and disconnected limbs.

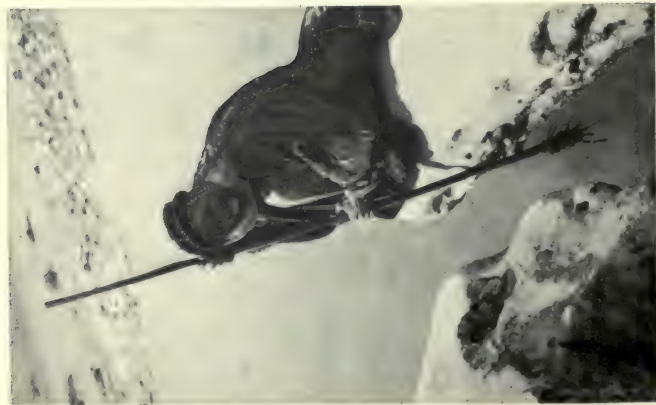
Baghdadi was a place of innumerable fleas, and we were rejoiced to leave it and take the road. As usual, we made an early start, and it was weird work marching in the desolation while the sun was yet far below the horizon. Since Hit we had traversed the most deadly, stony country, bare and uninhabited, and utterly irretrievable from its desert condition. Low hills flanked the winding river on both sides, and ran down almost to the water's edge. Occasionally there was a small settlement on the banks, cultivating a thin strip of level ground that contrived to exist between the desert and the water. Irrigation is ensured by a kind of water-wheel that is characteristic of the Euphrates, and practicable because of the speed of the current, due to the hilly country in which the river here flows. The wheels are thirty to forty feet in diameter, and present blades to the stream which forces them continually to move. Secured to the edge of the wheel at short intervals are earthen water-jars of a capacity of about a gallon apiece, and these are so arranged that, after submersion during the turning of the wheel to which they are attached, they come up full and discharge their contents into

a trough as they reach the top of the circuit and commence the downward turn. The result is a supply of about forty gallons a minute without any effort on the part of the owner. The wheels work day and night without ceasing, supplying small channels that run hither and thither among numerous small patches isolated from each other by tiny earthen embankments. The cultivator has only to divert the water from one to the other of his little fields as their needs require. It is a precious principle of water-supply, and the direct gift of Heaven. No wonder the Arab is devout. The noise made by the great wheels—for there are sometimes half a dozen working side by side—is a deep drone that fills the air with solemn sadness. They are weird things those wheels, and help to breed melancholy, their soft booming voices seemingly an eternal protest against the labour they perform and the loneliness of their lives.

During this day's journey we came across a delightful variant of the monotonous scenery. Topping a low ridge there suddenly met our gaze a broad band of brilliant blue lying in a shallow valley. One side of the valley was gently sloping beach, the other precipitous cream-coloured cliffs, and between lay the strip of water, gleaming like a jewel in a lifeless setting. It was indeed a strange place, for the water was warm and salt, and untroubled by the current of the broad brown river which, near by, hurried past, unheeding of its exquisite backwater. But the fish evidently delighted in this quiet refuge, for they entered it by the thousand and floated basking in the warmth, and wondering perhaps what this old familiar taste might be that stirred the instincts. The memory of the briny ocean was long departed

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*The Fisher's Spear.*



*A Water-wheel at close quarters.*



*Poised to strike.*

from them, but surely love for the strong salt of the sea from which they came long ago must abide in their bones. It seemed cruel that the wily Arab should have power to destroy these confiding things as they glided about under the rocks, crossing from shadow to shadow through beams of rippling sunlight. But among the stones on the bank their glistening bodies lay by the hundred, from the little fellow a foot long to the great thirty-pounder, all bleeding from the gash of the fisher's spear. There were old men who sat poised on the rocks above waiting the chance to strike, and naked boys who crouched at the corners and stabbed the fish as they passed. The Christian Lady exhorted Shamu to buy for his master a large deep-flanked one, which she herself would cook to please a Caliph. And for twopence Shamu purchased the own brother to a whale, which that night fed ten men full and left crumbs for a multitude.

Our next halt was at Haditheh, a long and picturesque village scattered on the banks of the river and on islands that in more prosperous and energetic days were connected to the mainland by bridges. Here there was no proper *khan*, and we had to hire most miserable accommodation. I shared a room, open to the day on one side, with the Christian Lady, who was beginning to show very decided signs of wear. Here our muleteer purchased a new horse, to take the place of one that threatened to break up. Needless to say, he bought it with my money, advanced before the time stipulated upon.

We next made a short march to the ruined *khan* at Kalat Ifhemi, where we found a large number of carriages, bound from Aleppo to Baghdad, halted for the night. Owing to the Delaim troubles navigation of the river was stopped, and travellers in large

numbers were using the land route. In consequence of the crowd we had difficulty in finding room, and had to risk our lives in an upper storey that was far from secure. Here we were overtaken by the man who, the previous night, had sold the horse to our muleteer. He wanted his beast back, and made a terrible commotion in the endeavour to effect his purpose. The buyer was not to be deprived of his bargain, however, and in the cold morning before sunrise we were delayed two hours by this persistent fellow. Fowle and I, as well as our *zaptieh*, tried persuasion, threats, and, finally, blows, without avail. He clung to his beloved's bridle, and swore that death alone would part them. When the bridle was slipped off the horse's head he let go and clung round its neck, and showed no sign of relaxing his hold even when the trousers were pulled off him. He just wanted his animal back, and nothing else in the world mattered to him. Though the beast was no beauty, and dear enough at the money according to my ideas, the ridiculous fellow blubbered like an infant about it, until everybody came to the conclusion that since selling he had been offered a better price and was really after the extra few shillings. An Arab will go through fire and water for a little money.

And so to Anah, without doubt the longest village in the whole world. It took us over two hours to march from one end to the other, and all the while its breadth, including the fields by which the inhabitants live, is never more than a hundred yards. Here a Turkish officer whom we met at the *khan* took us to visit the *kaimakam*, an official who in the ordinary way would have called first on distinguished travellers. We found the gentleman at meat,





*The Euphrates at Anah.*



*Dyke in the Euphrates to throw the current against the water-wheel.*

TO THE  
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CONGRESS

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and my spirit was greatly darkened by being offered his left hand to shake—a deadly insult in the world of Islam, as the initiated know. Having waived our dignity by visiting him, we were greatly disgusted at being so treated, and cut the interview short after the briefest conversation. The *kaimakam* was a most mild young man to look at, and extremely shy, and it was astonishing that he should have received us so peculiarly. The reason became apparent when we departed, for the poor fellow, when I ignored his left hand, modestly held out the right for inspection—full of greasy rice that he had been about to stuff into his mouth when we suddenly entered and disturbed his intentions! So I squeezed his left hand affectionately, and left him to resume his eating and in no doubt as to our complete appeasement.

Our march northwards, and to the higher level of the desert, resulted in a gradual change of climate. Anah marks the dividing line between where the date-palm flourishes and where it exists on sufferance. Its delightful groves left behind, we have practically seen the last of the graceful tree that has hitherto adorned the landscape at intervals, and supplied the people with the essential of life. In these days I took to eating dates myself on the road, and very sustaining I found them when walking far in the bitter cold of early morning. They are said to remain in the inside, slowly imparting their strength-giving properties, whilst other food waltzes through the stomach, producing only an ephemeral effect. In fact they “stay wid you,” as the Irish Tommy has it.

A little beyond Anah we saw the ruined fort of Rahoveh on the other bank, a fine old red sandstone building grandly situated on a bluff around which



the Euphrates sweeps in a wide semicircle. To avoid a big bend in the river we here left its banks and cut across the desert, meeting for the first time the Wind of the Old Woman, a fearsome blast that blows over those regions for seven days in early spring, and makes the cold east winds of our northern shores mere zephyrs by comparison. There were no clothes in my kit that would keep the Old Woman out, and when one opened one's mouth there was no shutting it except by turning round and making a shelter of one's head. We tramped for hours in the endeavour to keep warm, and seldom succeeded. Passing Nahiyeh, we next came to el-Gaim, near where we entered a huge plain, the edge of the desert having retired far to the west, while on the other side of the river it had disappeared altogether. In this neighbourhood are extensive ruins, which are supposed to include the Tomb of Gordian, and to mark the Perso-Roman boundary of ancient times. Then, on the eleventh day out from Baghdad, to Abu Kemal, for which Sir William Willcocks predicts a great future.

A flood or an earthquake, or some other cataclysm of nature, a few years ago destroyed the old village, whereupon the inhabitants rebuilt their homes on a new site and in the modern style. The principal street is broad and straight, and the beginnings of others run at right angles. The architecture belongs to no known period, and is likely to remain unique to Abu Kemal. Here we proposed to leave the regular route and to cut across the desert to Palmyra, the ancient Tadmor in the Wilderness. We were immediately confronted with a host of difficulties. The *kaimakam* utterly declined to furnish an escort, and there was reason to think that he might use force to stop us if we went without. Our muleteers



*Abu Kemal.*



*The Caravanserai at Abu Kemal.*

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declined to go altogether, while local guides magnified the difficulties of water and Bedouin robber bands, until one was constrained to ask for an explanation of the compatibility of thousands of roaming bandits and the complete absence of water—how could one exist without the other? It was all a question of money of course, and as I was not prepared to pay an enormous sum merely to be completely uncomfortable during a six-days' march, I gave up the idea altogether. Fowle, however, was determined to see that particular bit of country, and with great enterprise and no little gallantry made an arrangement to start off quietly by himself.

After a great deal of discussion, carried on secretly, he was able to secure the services of a guide, and a complete set of Arab clothes. In the morning we started out before daybreak ostensibly to continue our journey together on the ordinary route. We contrived to get our escort, now increased to two horsemen owing to the unsettled character of the neighbouring tribes, to the front, and then Fowle met his guide and retired into the desert, whence he emerged a complete Arab when observed from a distance, but plainly a foreigner when close at hand. His caravan and servants remained with mine, and we were to meet a week later at Tadmor. With nothing to lose but his two horses—he had mounted the guide—I hoped he would get through all right. Besides a few necessities in the saddle-bags, he carried only a revolver and a camera, and he let the guide see that all his money was placed in my custody. I confess to having felt a good deal of anxiety about the adventure, and made it very plain to the guide that if anything happened to his charge, I would pursue him from one end of the world to the

other and have blood for blood. Very probably it was my duty to have urged Fowle to forgo the attempt, and to have taken steps to stop him if he refused to listen. But as what he was doing was just what I would have liked myself, if I had been younger and less timid, I did not feel called upon to interfere except in so far as to make clear the danger. Anyhow, little in this world is to be attained without risk, and if a budding soldier is not to take chances, who is, I wonder!

The remarkable expansion of the valley of the Euphrates, of which Abu Kemal is the centre, has been noted by Sir William Willcocks, who observes that irrigation would here render a very large area cultivable. In traversing this great plain the river loses speed, and the perpetual-motion wheels which supply water in the faster reaches give place to contrivances worked by animals. Cultivation is at present restricted to patches on the immediate banks of the river, while the interior of the plain is entirely neglected. The bringing of a railway would undoubtedly lead to great developments, and possibly to irrigation on a considerable scale. The comparative proximity to market would give the Abu Kemal plain a great advantage over Mesopotamia, and as the soil appears to be alluvium it would be as profitable to work as the other. It might not improbably be found, too, that the more temperate climate, owing to the higher level and more northerly latitude, would be more suitable for the cultivation of cotton.

From Abu Kemal we marched through an interminable jungle of bushes, which I vainly searched for hare, and halted for the night at the lonely *khan* of Salahieh. The meandering of the Euphrates here drives the route close to the edge of the

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TO THE  
MOUNTAINS



*"... the edge of the desert which presents  
a remarkable frontage of precipitous  
cliff ..."*



*A Village on the lower Euphrates.*

desert, which presents throughout several days' journey a remarkable frontage of precipitous cliff about 200 feet high. Near Salahieh, and placed on the edge of the cliff, are the nameless ruins of a fine old castle, supposed to have been a stronghold of Saladin. Starting very early in the morning, we unexpectedly found the single track which does duty for a road suddenly begin to ascend the cliff by means of a fine road constructed by Turkish engineers. The road leads past the old castle, which commands a magnificent view from its elevated position. Altogether it is a most curious erection, consisting only of a single massive wall many feet thick, and built of enormous blocks of stone, cutting off a segment of the cliff edge. Between the wall and the precipice, which descends sheer to the plain below, is only a narrow strip of ground, and here one supposes the soldiers of Saladin to have safely camped. In the weird light before sunrise this strange relic of heroic days was an eerie place. Sitting on the topmost point of the corner keep I saw, far below, the Euphrates stretching over the darkened plain, its steel-blue water scarce revealed by an edging of rosy light in the eastern horizon. The blue and rose were living colours against their background of unlighted earth and dull grey sky, gleams of promise amid the melancholy of night. Shamu would not let me stay to see the advent of day, for bad people were abroad and our caravan had gone on before. We mounted our horses and followed, to find ourselves on the plateau of the desert whose edge we had climbed. Around the old castle are the remains of an extensive earthen rampart, once the outer defence of an old-time city, but no man knows of what period, or of what people, or how named. Some

day, perhaps, when a beastly railway passes near, its secret will be read, and its mysterious loneliness defiled by the presence of the globe-trotter.

A most wearisome march over the bare and stony upland desert brought us within sight of our next halting-place, a busy little town called Meyadin, far away in the plain below. Having descended to the lower level, a continuation of the broad valley that stretches from Abu Kemal, we took an interminable time to reach the low mass of buildings that denoted the town. Immediately to the west of our route stood the ruins of the castle of Rahaba, said to be the Rohoboth of the Bible. I was too sick of the Wind of the Old Woman and of the length of the day's march to go out of the way to inspect it, and was never more thankful in my life to reach my destination. We quickly found quarters in the upper storey of an old-fashioned *khan*, where I was immediately besieged by callers in the shape of all the officials of the town, from the *kaimakam* downwards. When our escort of the day before had discovered that Fowle was missing, they were very anxious to go back and report to their chief, and it was evident that word had been sent ahead to keep an eye on me, and to see what mischief I might be up to. The Turk is always suspicious of what he cannot understand, and why the Britisher wants to travel in these inconvenient lands is always a mystery to him. Having talked my visitors silly, I got rid of them by pleading fatigue, whereupon I began rummaging for my writing materials. In so doing I noticed a box of cartridges, and remembered that my pistol needed reloading, for I had fired several shots during the day at cranes in the river. Just to be sure that it was empty I pulled the trigger, pointing, fortunately, at the roof.



Out rang a shot with a noise like the crack of doom, and the bullet went slap through the roof, bringing down a shower of plaster. Shamu, cooking round the corner, put his head in at the open door and remarked sympathetically, "No good, sir; he run away." He seemed to think it quite natural that I should be trying to shoot cats in my bedroom!

Early morning at Meyadin was most unpromising. The sky above was black with clouds, the ground was soaking with rain, and there was every prospect of a stormy day. Travelling in heavy rain is one of the most repulsive things I know, for not only is it impossible to keep dry oneself, but one knows that all the time wet is slowly penetrating to the interior of one's kit. Then one's servants are cold and miserable, and all the world is melancholy. And how pleasant seemed the prospect of a day of rest, and a real opportunity to work off arrears of writing. But Shamu had long been ready, and was impatiently waiting for me to decide. It was plain to him that I was shirking; and when I made some remark indicating my frame of mind he rapped out at me, "Man 'fraid never make anything." A rebuke like that was not to be justified for the world, and I girded up my loins and gave the word to start. We were rewarded, after a preliminary wetting, by the appearance of the sun and the complete cessation of the Wind of the Old Woman. But in consequence the heat was great, and the way more weary than ever. Vain attempts to shoot duck spoilt my temper, and we arrived at Deir-el-Zor after nine hours' marching over a dead flat plain in a sad state of fatigue and sulkiness. Men and horses, and especially the poor Christian Lady, all needed a rest badly after a fortnight's really hard travelling.

Deir is quite a desert metropolis with its seven or

eight thousand inhabitants and a considerable bazaar, and here it is usual for caravans to halt a clear day. The *mutesarraf* is independent of the governors of adjacent provinces, and deals direct with Constantinople. His appointment is important, for it brings him into relationship with the tribes, over whom he has influence in ratio to the power at his back and the support afforded him by the Government. Here meet the routes coming from Damascus, Aleppo, Mosul, and Baghdad, while the town is a port for the considerable down-stream traffic on the Euphrates. It is hardly necessary to mention that there is no up-stream trade, owing to the speed of the current of the river. Some forty years ago one of Lynch's boats actually made the voyage across country from Baghdad to the Euphrates and then up to Meskineh, near the foot of the mountains of Asia Minor. This feat was performed at high water, and never has been, nor is ever likely to be, repeated. Not only is there the current to contend with, but the navigation presents considerable difficulty owing to the stone dykes thrown out into the stream with the object of forcing the current against the water-wheels. In low water the flat-bottomed boats that descend the river have considerable trouble, and I imagine there would then be insufficient depth for a steamer. At all times the risks of navigation would be great for a steamer, as the existence of the dykes, together with the fact that the bed is rocky, constitute very different conditions from the alluvial mud which makes navigation of the lower rivers safe and easy. All boats are built at Birejik on the upper river, and are dismantled, and the wood sold, on arrival at their destination down-stream.

Deir was very pleasant in the early spring, and

many of the fruit-trees were covered with blossom. An island in the river, connected with the town by a bridge, is well wooded, and the gardens shady to walk in. I received great attention from the authorities, and an escort was deputed to show me round the sights, which are strictly limited. Between the island and the eastern shore of the river is a magnificent new stone bridge, of which all but the first piers on either side are unbuilt. The work was commenced by a good *mutesarrif* who has gone hence, and left the project unfinished, like so many others in Turkey.



## CHAPTER XXV.

## THE HIGH DESERT.

ONE of my troubles at Deir was to defeat the intention to provide me with a large escort to cross the desert to Palmyra. There were no gendarme posts on the road, and the same men would have to accompany me through. The authorities wanted to send a whole troop, but I desired only two men. I could not very well insist on a reduction, because if I did the responsibility for trouble would be my own, whereas I wanted it to lie with the authorities. Eventually they agreed that two would be sufficient, and on that understanding I gave thanks for courtesies received and bade farewell.

In the morning, however, four mounted men appeared, and while Shamu and the muleteers were having a row with the *khanji* about charges they all adjourned to a coffee-shop for refreshment. When we were ready they requested me to pay their bill, which was quite in traditional style. I might remark that though orders appear to have been given to the gendarmes that fees are not to be taken from travellers, the fees are expected all the same. Hence my anxiety to keep down the number of the escort. I noticed that while the orders are observed in the vicinity of

THE  
NEW  
ENGLAND  
LIBRARY

TO VINU  
ANABOLLA



*Entrance to Anah, the longest village in the world.*



*Deir-el-Zor.*



Baghdad, the farther away one travelled the less they were regarded.

From Deir onward the character of our journey changed completely, for while we had hitherto followed the Euphrates, with brief diversions, we now turned W.S.W. and entered the high desert, leaving the valley of the river behind. Where we had found towns, villages, military posts and caravanserais, and abundant water, we now had the prospect of the poorest accommodation, of bad water and sometimes none at all, and of stages of interminable length. The monotony of travelling was very great, for the rolling plain is absolutely void of things of interest. In the far north stretched a low line of purple hill, but there were neither trees nor bushes, habitations nor living creatures, to be seen in the immense space that intervened. After eleven hours' marching without a halt over the stony, waterless desert, we arrived at the lonely little post of Kabaku, where the Government has dug a well and built a poor *khan* for the accommodation of travellers. One of our mules died of exhaustion as soon as we arrived, and if it had not been for the tea that Shamu provided, I would surely have followed the poor brute to the bourne from which no man or beast returneth. It was here that I was moved to deep sympathy for the unfortunate Christian Lady, and sent out to her from my own teapot a cup to put life into her wearied old body. She sent Shamu back to say that she would pray for me day and night without ceasing. But as she was a Roman Catholic I instructed Shamu at once to request her to stop, and on no account to attempt anything of the kind—in foreign parts a good Presbyterian has to be very careful.

At Kabaku I realised for the first time the real mean-

ing of scarcity of water. In the course of the evening several parties of Arabs arrived from far distant encampments to draw supplies, not only for themselves but for their flocks and herds. Grass in the vicinity of a well is speedily devoured, and the nomads go farther afield for new pastures, and in so doing must send for water, as there may be no more than the single well within a radius of twenty miles. And such water ! So bitterly salt that I could not touch it, either to drink plain or when used for tea.

To watch the Arabs was interesting. The well was about eighty feet deep, the chalky sides at the mouth thickly grooved with rope marks. Projecting over the top was a wooden framework across which was placed the axle of an iron wheel. A large skin bucket, kept open by an iron ring, was let down to the water, and when full the rope attached was hitched over the wheel, whereupon several men and women raced out into the desert dragging the other end of the rope with them. Up came the water, and was tipped into the great leathern skin waiting. Back came the drawers, and down went the bucket for a renewal of the procedure. When all the skins are full they are slung across camels and horses and donkeys, and off the Arabs go, taking their buckets and ropes and iron wheel with them. Travellers without a wheel and rope can get no water, and if you borrow these appliances from the man in charge you must pay for them. The Arabs, too, have to pay the Government for the water. The drawing for a large camp, numbering hundreds of camels and thousands of sheep, is a laborious task, and when there are many nomads in a neighbourhood, the process goes on day and night, amid great noise, and frequently with quarrelling that leads to bloodshed.

Next day was less monotonous, for we passed through





TO VINI  
ADPOU...AO



*Father, Mother, and Child.*

several Arab encampments and saw something of the domestic economy of these primitive people. Many of their camels had newly-born foals, and queer little beasts they were, covered with the softest snow-white down. For a cigarette the herdsmen would willingly draw a bowlful of the rich milk of these newly-made mothers, and the Christian Lady and all our caravan but myself revelled in the abundance. Shamu, however, procured for me what suited my palate better, a goodly supply of the finest *leben*. This is the sour milk become fashionable in England in recent days, but a very old friend of mine, for it is daily food throughout all Central Asia. It is curious that the West has been so slow to appreciate this delectable Oriental staple of life, always known in some form or another throughout Europe. The Arabs make it of fresh milk, when it is rich and nourishing, and of milk from which the butter has been extracted, when it is the most refreshing and most delicious drink that man could wish for on a hot day. From both kinds the moisture can be allowed to drip away, leaving a rich cream cheese, or a strong saltish cheese. Doctors affect to believe that the sour milk which they advocate must be produced in a particular way and by the right kind of microbe, and that none other is genuine. Well, I know that the Arabs and the Turks and the Persians and the Turkomans and the Kirghiz and hosts of others don't know anything about microbes; yet they provide the real Mackay day after day and year after year, like their predecessors from time immemorial. And they do it simply by adding a little of yesterday's *leben* to the new milk of to-day; and it always comes the same. And they can start it off afresh by boiling the milk and letting it stand in wooden buckets in a cool place; and still it comes the same. Nor is its price ever more than that of fresh

milk. Indeed, there seems to be current quite a number of distorted notions about sour milk. It is supposed to induce longevity, because Bulgarians who use it never die until over ninety years of age. Quite so; but how about the children? Wherever this food is used the infant mortality is over fifty per cent, and that is true of every country between Bulgaria and Afghanistan. The people who live upon it breed like rabbits, and their progeny just die like rabbits fed on rat poison. It would be a woeful thing if the parents of Great Britain and Ireland, and of a few other places, who appear in these days to believe that it is a sin to have more than two children, should risk one of their ewe lambs for lack of a warning from me. If they *will* eat sour milk, however, let them get over the difficulty by having four strings to their bow instead of two, and then the mortality will leave things as they were.

During the day our guards were rather worried on two occasions by the appearance in the far distance of small bands of Arabs, whom they declared to be robbers. With my glasses I could distinctly see the spears carried by one party; but probably we looked too formidable in numbers to be tackled, for besides the four gendarmes we numbered, with servants and muleteers, eight people, most of whom were mounted. One curious episode was in connection with the appearance of a rapidly-moving figure not far from our line of march. My attention was drawn to it by one of the gendarmes, and as I thought it was a gazelle I told the man to have a shot at it. He immediately loaded his rifle and was about to shoot, when the corporal of the party told him not, and himself trotted across to intercept the figure, which I then realised to be a man on foot, whose cloak fluttering in the wind resembled the hind-quarter action of a beast galloping—so deceptive is the light in



the desert. All were quite clear that the man was a sheep-stealer and a robber on the look-out for business. It was the merest chance that our four gendarmes had not started potting at him, for stray persons of this kind are the pest of the desert. They are generally armed with a concealed sword or pistol, and are much too strong-minded for the timid muleteer.

After another long journey we arrived at Birjudid, which is simply a desolate building, partially ruined, where the Government keeps an old soldier to look after the well, a hole 120 feet deep, from which only the most pestiferous water is obtainable. Here were many Arabs drawing water, all of a most degraded-looking type, and declared by our escort to be robbers pure and simple. On the road I had given our gendarmes money to buy a sheep, half for themselves and half for my own men. They did me considerably in the price, but as it only amounted to fourteen shillings for a magnificent animal I let the matter pass. But not content with having cheated me, messieurs the gendarmes demanded a supply of rice with which to cook their share, and said it was no use to them without. When it came to the question of leaving or taking, however, they wisely stuck to their mutton and found rice for themselves. Throughout the journey they wanted forage for their horses and money for themselves, not to speak of trifles like tobacco and coffee. On the whole, however, they were cheery fellows, and were not the least abashed by my refusal to comply with their demands.

Out from Birjudid the character of the ground underwent a change, and from the endless rolling desert we gradually entered a region of desolate hills. Where the desert had been spotted with patches of green, and frequently flecked with the yellow of buttercups and

the crimson of poppies, these lonely slopes were bare and colourless. In their midst we reached the village of Sukhna, one of the most wretched-looking places it has ever been my lot to see. At one spot are five scarecrow date-palms, and at another six more. The houses can hardly be distinguished from the rocks against and among which they are built. The water of a sulphurish spring darkens the mud employed, and the result is a dulness of colour most depressing to the eye. Moreover, the skies were leaden when we arrived, while a bleak wind sighed along the valley. It was the atmosphere one expects at the edge of the grave.

Thus, mentally shivering, I rode towards the entrance to the village, past an ugly heap of rocks that stood in the way. While skirting this shapeless mass, however, there suddenly came a gleam of dazzling azure, and I realised, sunk within a cleft, a pool of quivering blue water. Climbing forth, and clinging to the dusky rock, was an olive-skinned figure unmistakably female; and just below me on a ledge stood a shapely, cream-coloured form silhouetted against the blue beyond. From a distance of only a few feet large and unabashed brown eyes looked straight into mine, and a mouthful of pearly teeth laughed at the passing stranger. And then the picture was gone. And, miserable that I am, I lacked the nerve to turn my beast and to go back and face the raillery in those eyes. Such is the modesty of the West against the enchantments of the East!

There was no *khan* at Sukhna, but Shamu arranged for accommodation in a queer house with a small courtyard. Here a curious room built against the rock, and divided into compartments, was allotted to me, while the remainder of the party camped in the open. In one part of my room was a large heap of potato-like looking things, truffles, if you please, gathered in the desert for

THE  
MOUNTAIN  
COUNTRY



*My Caravan.*



*Not Dead, but Sleeping.*



TO YOU  
AMERICA

despatch to Damascus. All the way from Baghdad we had been buying them for a penny per pound, while in Europe they are worth nearly their weight in silver. The business of our host, apparently, was the collection of this delicate fungus, and he was now away searching the desert for it. In his absence we were entertained by his wife and an uncommonly handsome sister who showed remarkable friendliness. Away in this back-water the Arab women are as free and independent as the men, and as appreciative of male observation and attention as their more civilised sisters elsewhere. And for good looks, I believe there is as much positive beauty among them as among any race in the world.

But Sukhna has an evil reputation, and a guard stood on watch in the compound throughout the night. The women that came in and out of my room on their own business, and to inspect my property, managed to get off with a valued penknife, and if I had not been watchful they would have taken everything within sight. They cheated the muleteers in the forage, and a great rumpus ensued. When they heard that I intended to go and bathe in the pool among the rocks, which is warm and sulphurish, they told all the other women in the village, and a crowd waited at the gate to escort me to the water. A pink Feringhi was a sight not to be missed, and they all meant to see me, and probably to turn it into a mixed party. But in the altogether, the only bathing-costume known in Cathay, the prospect was too disconcerting, and I gave up the idea of a dip in that delightful blue haunt of the nymphs, much to the disappointment of the female inhabitants. I am afraid I am very stupidly constituted in some respects.

One of our worst days was spent marching from

Sukhna. We started at 3.30 A.M., and travelled in darkness for two hours, over abominably stony ground. When the light came a terrible west wind arose, and we battled with it for another seven hours. Some of our beasts were tired, some were lame, and two were dead of exhaustion, and the consequence was a melancholy pace. I wanted to push ahead, but it was clear enough that doing so would invite attention from marauders, for a divided escort would mean two weak parties instead of a strong one. And so we marched to Ereka, a miserable village scarce showing above the ground, as if flattened upon it by an eternal wind. Here upon a low eminence stands an old police post with rooms that boast no doors, and the darkest, coldest, and draughtiest place I have ever known. Outside, two sulphur springs supplied water which the local sheep seemed glad enough to drink, but which was poison to me. Towards evening we were all so cold and uncomfortable, and hopeless of a good sleep, besides which the servants and muleteers were loudly quarrelling, that I proposed a night march. There being a fine moon the plan was approved, and we took the road about seven o'clock. Our destination was Palmyra, the city of the great Queen Zenobia, and the Tamar built by Solomon. Whether it be the true scriptural Tadmor in the Wilderness is a matter of doubt, though Tadmor assuredly is the name by which it is known among the Arabs to this day.

It proved a romantic ride. Dark hills were outlined in the north, while the south was black and gloomy. Overhead, from west to east, raced an interminable procession of tight-packed clouds, borne by a swift wind in the upper skies. Between the passing of each cloud the moon flooded the land with unearthly light, herself floating serene and full-faced in the translucent



purple above. As each dark shape, fringed with silver, advanced across the heavens a mighty black shadow would rush across the land. There followed instant night, and the blotting out of distant hills and pale-gleaming rocks. For a few minutes we would be plunged in obscurity, trusting to our beasts alone to follow the track across the desert. Then the light would come again with magic suddenness, like a gigantic broom sweeping up the murk. Far above us a gale of wind made the clouds to gallop, but down below reigned calm and a mysterious stillness, broken only by the crunching of our horses' feet on the gravel of the way. One of the escort was a singer, and at times he rent the peace of the night with the melancholy cadences of Arab song. His raucous voice alternately lashed the wilderness with strident calling, and sank to a croon so sweet, it seemed the very creeping things must come forth to hear.

About midnight, owing to the slow speed of the caravan, I decided to push ahead and to risk encounter with robbers. Leaving two of the gendarmes, I took the other two and Shamu with me, and we rode forward, leaving the tired animals to come along at their own pace. Far ahead, in the intervals of brilliant moonlight, we could see three hills, between which lay Tadmor. They seemed very near, but proved far off, and it was almost two in the morning before we found ourselves entering a lane between high walls, with trees and shadowed gardens on either hand. It seemed a commonplace enough entry, until the moon suddenly leaped from behind a cloud and disclosed a row of Greek columns, cut clear against the transparent depths of the sky. They appeared between an opening in the trees, and were shut off from sight almost as soon as observed. Fatigued as I was, it seemed to

me for a moment as if the sudden glimpse of these exquisite pillars was a trick of the imagination. But, immediately, another opening in the black line of branches gave a second view, and added to it, standing upon an eminence, further groups of columns, some whole, some broken, with arches here and there, and a broken portal. A little farther and a turn in the lane gave us a fresh view of this ruined scene, with the pale stone gleaming in the light of the moon, from amid the velvet darkness of the scattered trees. These ghosts of Palmyra's vanished greatness gave place to a mighty wall, and we found ourselves riding beside the massive stones of the terrace from which springs the ancient city's principal glory, the Temple of the Sun, built in the dim past in honour of Baal.

And under the very shadow of the temple we halted before some mean houses and dismounted. Shamu proceeded to wake the inhabitants by thundering upon their wooden doors, noise which brought forth a solemn echo from the ponderous wall beside us. For a long time only the dogs answered with their furious barking, but at last timid voices prayed the reason of disturbance in the dead of night. Much persuasion resulted in the reluctant opening of one low door, and in we all defiled into a small courtyard, where a man and his wife received us in the scanty attire of people dragged unseasonably from bed. There was a clean room for me and a refreshing drink of sour *leben*. But no sleep until the caravan arrived with my kit, unless I took to the hard floor. But Shamu produced tea, and then I smoked, and by that time there was shouting outside, and from the darkness our loaded animals emerged one by one until the tale was complete. A hundred and thirty-one miles in four days from the Euphrates was not bad travelling, but had been



*Exterior of the Temple of the Sun.*



*Interior of the Temple of the Sun.*





accomplished at the cost of much travail. All were tired as dogs, and as for the Christian Lady I expected to see her carried in a corpse. But she was hard stuff, and it was a comfort to hear her shrill voice admonishing the men with all the fervour of a suffragette, and to know myself guiltless of her death. One phase of the commotion that ensued on the arrival of the caravan interested me. Yusuf, the head muleteer, had tied to my beast a nose-bag of barley to be given on arrival. This I had duly done, and had left my animal comfortably munching. But when Yusuf appeared the nose-bag was missing, and was found empty in a corner only after prolonged search. Then Yusuf passed his hand along my horse's belly, and immediately roared out that a robber had taken the barley and that the beast had had none of it. He accused the housewife of having done this evil thing, and she, poor woman, explained that she had seen one of the gendarmes empty the barley into his own horse's nose-bag and march away with it to his own quarters. And so Yusuf came bleating and lamenting to me, and on his knees demanded justice. To pillage mankind is fair sport throughout all Arabia, but to steal the food from a horse at the end of a journey is crime abominable. Only a Turkish *zaptieh*, of all the ruffians in the world, would have done such a thing. Public opinion in Tadmor was roused in the morning by recital of this deed, and the *zaptieh* came very humbly to return a bagful of grain which he had taken away the previous evening—by mistake.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

## PALMYRA.

TADMOR in the Wilderness is a name to haunt the imagination, and to visit this forgotten corner of the earth had long been my hope. That there is doubt about its claims to be so called does not affect the romance of the place, any more than the possibility of Bacon having written the plays of Shakespeare detracts from the marvel of the writings which we call Shakespeare's. The strange thing is that a great city should once have flourished in the midst of the Syrian desert, and played its part in the history of its time. It is its extraordinary isolation that appeals to the mind, and the contrast of its magnificence with the solitude of its surroundings. Of the Tamar which it is supposed that Solomon built here there is no trace, and the earliest inscriptions, as well as the earliest references in history, relate only to the Greek-named city of Palmyra. It was a large and flourishing place when first mentioned by Pliny in connection with Mark Antony's endeavour to reduce it in B.C. 34. Three hundred years later it had been wiped off the face of the earth altogether, and so buried in oblivion that when a party of British merchants from Aleppo visited the ruins in 1678 they thought to have discovered a place unknown in history.



But within this period the inhabitants of Palmyra drank deep of the waters of life, knowing wealth and fame and power to a degree testified by the grandeur of their works.

Roman policy was responsible for Palmyra's rise into prominence, as well as for her eclipse. Situated beyond the eastern boundary of the Empire, just before the Christian era commenced, Palmyra was an important depôt for the trade between the Mediterranean and the East, as well as a strategic point between the Roman and Parthian spheres. The Romans, in their desire for commercial extension eastward, found the Antioch - Aleppo - Euphrates route dominated by the Armenian kingdom in Asia Minor, and sought to extend their influence through Syria and Palmyra. Their earlier attempts failed, but in 130 A.D. Adrian succeeded and Palmyra became a Roman colony, autonomously governed. Under the Roman ægis the city developed great prosperity, and in 260 Odenathus, its self-styled king, took Mesopotamia from the Persians, who meanwhile had conquered the Parthians, and added it to the Empire. Odenathus dying, his mantle fell on his wife Zenobia, Queen of the East, and this great lady, celebrated for her beauty, her talents, and her taste, extended the power of Palmyra until it included Syria and part of Egypt, as well as Mesopotamia. Her ambition had long caused suspicion in Rome, and the climax came with her injudicious assumption of the imperial purple. The forces of the Empire were set in motion against her, and in 273 Aurelian defeated her army in Syria. Shortly afterwards Zenobia herself was captured, and the end of her five years of delirious success was the place of a prisoner in the Emperor's triumphal procession at Rome. The Palmyrenes hav-

ing risen against, and massacred, the Roman garrison in occupation, the city was forthwith destroyed, and henceforward existed merely as a frontier town of little importance.

Being no antiquarian, I shall leave it to my photographs to convey an idea to the reader of the ruins of Palmyra. A little explanation of the various features of the ancient city, however, may be ventured upon in support of the pictures, which, I grieve to relate, are rather poor owing to the virtue having suddenly departed from the lens that had hitherto served me well. Damp had got between the glasses that compose it, and where was limpid clarity there now shone forth iridescently all the colours of the rainbow. Nothing came out now but exposures made in the fiercest light. Quiet homely pictures conceived in the twilight of a narrow street, or in the shade of a pleasant wall, might as well never have been taken for all the result produced. What treasures have thus been lost daunts me to remember.

The remains of the city cover a level area of nearly a square mile. A bird's-eye view indicates that from end to end there once ran a street flanked all the way by magnificent columns, for they stand here and there in rows, while the ruins of most of those missing lie prone on the ground. At one end of the street stands the huge enclosure of the Temple of the Sun, nearly 300 yards square, surrounded by a wall over 70 feet high, and all resting on a base or floor composed of enormous blocks of stone standing high above the surrounding level. Round three sides of the interior is a double colonnade of two rows of Corinthian columns, many of which are still standing, while in the fourth side was the entrance, a porch 120 feet wide, with twelve pillars of great height.

THE  
PILLARS  
OF  
PALMYRA



*The Pillars of Palmyra.*



70 VMD  
ALBANY, N.Y.

These now lie broken in the dust, while the actual entrance has been built up with sections of pillars and any stones that came to hand into a huge defensive wall by the Mohammedan armies in the eighth century. The great street contains at one point an Arch of Triumph, of which the massive keystone has been endeavouring to fall out ever since the ruins have been visited by Europeans. Farther along, the remains of a hippodrome may be traced in the ground, as well as tombs and temples and palaces innumerable. The whole field of the ruins bristles with these reddish-white pillars, many standing wholly visible, many buried to half their height in rubbish and drifting sand. The capitals of the pillars are beautifully carved, but it is curious to see how the limestone has been eroded by the weather. The corbels, or little platforms, which are a feature of the pillars, throw an instructive light upon the character of the ancient Palmyrenes, for they were designed to hold the statues of prominent citizens, of whom there must have been enormous numbers if every place was occupied. As Palmyra had its own Parliament, however, one can understand the need for unlimited space for the purpose of honouring the deserving. At one point a huge monolith of blue spotted granite lies prostrate, its fellow still standing erect; the presumption that these must have been brought from Egypt at tremendous expense suggests the wealth and power of Palmyra in the days of its greatness.

A feature of Palmyra is its ruined tombs. These stand mostly on the bare slopes that overlook the city from the west, and in a defile through which passes the Damascus road. There is something peculiarly desolate about these monuments to the dead, due partly to their own broken condition, but principally

usually presented to a guest as a hint that his host has had enough of his company, the *mudir* gave the signal, and the concourse melted out into the road, leaving only the police officer who was to escort us round the ruins to see that we did not put any of the pillars in our pockets.

During the day we met a Peshawar Hadji who seemed to know his way about the ruins, and showed us many interesting things. This man was a great traveller, and had visited, among other places, Constantinople, Cairo, Mecca, Damascus, Baghdad, Teheran, Meshed, Herat, Cabul, Samarcand, Tashkent, Kashgar, Yarkand, and Marco Polo knows where else. For the life of me I could not guess his business, or why he had left his home in India thus to wander. His clothes were good enough, but he gave no impression of being prosperous, and, so far as I could gather, he was making a prolonged stay in Tadmor. He spoke of his family in India, and he was said to have a wife in Tadmor. I wonder if he has wives at all these other places; and, if so, how much he contributes to their support, and if they all remain faithful to him. With his large turban, long white beard, deep-set sparkling brown eyes, and flowing robes, the Hadji, in mind and in appearance, was the living embodiment of a personage from the Arabian Nights. I am sure an account of his wanderings, and the psychology of the motives that prompted them, would be a human document of consuming interest. Alas! that it cannot be of my editing.

Wandering among the tombs and pillars in the heat of the sun proved a wearisome business, and we returned to lunch not unabashed to think the claims of the body were greater than those of the imagination. At our door almost was the entrance to



THE  
CITY OF  
NEW YORK

TO THE  
LIVELY  
ADVENTURE



*A Woman of Tadmor.*

the Temple of the Sun, and here we went in the afternoon, intent on the marvels within and without. The magnificence of this building is strangely contrasted with the dwellings of present-day natives which cluster about the ancient walls and columns like the nests of wasps. The dirty mud plastered against the massive stones hides much of the beauty, but here and there the elegant pillars tower out of the rabbit-warren at their feet, their exquisite proportions a living commentary upon the surrounding degeneracy. For the people seem the dirtiest, greediest, and most shameless imaginable, thrusting their handfuls of rubbishy curios into one's face, and vehemently demanding money with or without excuse. The women are quite without modesty either in their clothes or their behaviour. But they are as good-looking as they are impudent, and if my camera had not served me false there would have been some strikingly handsome Jezebels to illuminate these pages. The people took us to see an old bath that had recently been discovered in the compound of a house. A few feet below the present surface of the ground the owner when digging struck against an edge of polished marble, and pursued his operations until he had completely uncovered a handsome bath about six feet long, exactly of modern shape and size, but with a curious extension at one end. This consisted of an aperture over a well-like hollow, from which a rope and bucket extracted water as clear as crystal and just warm enough to bathe in. Evidently, hitherto unknown to the present inhabitants, an aqueduct containing warm water runs underneath the ruins, constructed originally for the comfort and convenience of the ancient inhabitants.

Of the orchards and gardens with fruit and a few palm-trees, through which I passed into the town on



the night of my arrival, it is not necessary to say more than that they contain many antique fragments that look all the more graceful for their pleasant environment of green. But the subterranean brook that emerges from the slopes to the west of the town is not to be lightly passed over. We were told that it was warm and delightful, and that its slightly sulphurous character would be good for my lumbago. We went armed with soap and towels, and filled with the intention of washing ourselves whiter than snow. And when we got to the place, lo, all the women and children of Tadmor were there with the same object. They all skipped out of the cave and into their single garments so quickly that we had little time for observation. The squealing and laughing and shrieking in pretended horror were as feminine as they might have been anywhere, and very distracting to listen to. It seems to be my fate in foreign parts frequently to encounter the female element in *négligé*; on the whole I am disposed to think the real thing less formidable than the unblushing imitation thereof to be met with in picture galleries.

The women gone, we stripped outside, shivering in a chill wind, and then walked into the water to find it pleasantly tepid. Passing quickly into the mouth of the cave, we were out of the cold air and in a warm and humid atmosphere, slightly impregnated with the odour of sulphur. As we waded forward the water deepened, and as we got farther away from the entrance the light became soft and subdued, while the water, clear as crystal, lapped and clucked comfortably among the broken rocks that formed the sides of the narrow tunnel. The farther we went, the warmer the water became and the more sulphurous the air. At a hundred yards we could no

THE  
PALMYRENE  
TOMBS



*Tombs of the ancient Palmyrenes.*



*Entrance to the Subterranean Channel.*

78 MMU  
ADDITIONAL



longer see the entrance owing to a turn in the tunnel, though a pale flickering light continued to glimmer on the surface of the water. It was now so deep that we had to swim, while the ceiling of the tunnel came so low that we could easily touch it with our hands.

Several bends having reduced the light to almost nothing, it was a question whether it was safe to proceed farther into such a place of mystery. It was eerie work swimming in the darkness and silence, not knowing what horror might meet us, or what danger overwhelm us. It was silly to be frightened, of course, but the weirdness of the experience had a distinctly tempering effect on the nerves, and it would have taken very little to have made us flee for our lives. As it was, I suppose each of us refused to admit pusillanimity before the other, with the result that we swam about 300 yards into the bowels of the earth, and then stopped by mutual consent. Clinging to the rocks at the side, and hardly daring to move our heads for fear of knocking them upon the irregular roof that barely cleared the water, we stayed a few minutes enjoying the warmth, and wondering if suffocation by a current of bad air was to be the price of the adventure. We swam back more quickly than we came, and very miserable it was dressing in the cold wind after the delightful warmth of the cave.

The people of Tadmor declare that this stream comes underground all the way from Damascus, but elsewhere it is regarded as a spring. Its volume and temperature appear to vary considerably at different times of the year, for a friend in Damascus told me that he was only able to swim up a few hundred feet, when he was blocked by a perpendicular wall, while the temperature of the water was at blood heat. We found it much

cooler, while I think we were able to pass the point where he was stopped owing to the level of the water being lower. Anyhow, this mysterious place appears to have entirely escaped notice in the guide-books, and the visitor who omits a swim in the tunnel will have missed one of the most curious and interesting of the features of Palmyra.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

## AN ENCOUNTER WITH ROBBERS.

OF the various schemes that have recently been proposed for the construction of a railway between the Mediterranean and Mesopotamia, at least two involve a route touching Tadmor. Projectors of these schemes appear to cherish the delusion, because a few names appear on the map in this region, that there exists a chain of cultivated spots susceptible of development into a belt of cultivation. This fallacy corrected, one recognises, however, the value of Tadmor's position on a straight line drawn towards the Euphrates from that point on the Syrian coast where end the exclusive rights of the Germans under the terms of the Baghdad Railway Convention. Moreover, the French are now constructing a branch of their Syrian system to join Tripoli on the coast with the town of Homs, the ancient Emesa, and the spot where the euphoniously-named emperor, Heliogabalus, first saw the light. Therefore, to take the shortest road to Homs, as being the likeliest—or the least unlikely—track of some future railway, seemed the obvious route for me to follow after leaving Tadmor. The *mudir* and the police officer seemed perfectly agreeable to this course, and duly appointed an escort



enough, about a mile away there extended a long line of the shafts characteristic of the underground aqueducts of Persia and Beluchistan. To these countries I had always supposed this peculiar style of water-engineering to be confined, but here it is, and at Damascus, apparently the work of Roman hands. The principle involved is the same, but the contrast of method is remarkable. The Persians dig in the ground and heap up the *débris* extracted in a ring round the hole. Their rough shafts are continually being filled up by rubbish and the underground channels blocked, with the result that constant repair is necessary. But this aqueduct, constructed probably two thousand years ago, is as efficient to-day as when originally built, and has certainly not been repaired for a thousand years. Every shaft is neatly faced with dressed stone, and the channel underground, I understand, throughout its length is lined with masonry. It has been suggested that this aqueduct begins nearly a hundred miles away in the eastern slopes of the Anti-Lebanon, but Dr Kelman, in his delightful book, 'From Damascus to Palmyra,' states that he followed the shafts to the hill of Kerasi, a few miles to the west of Palmyra, where they end in a saddle, clearly indicating the presence underground of a perennial spring which supplies the water. This stream emerges from the ground close to Palmyra, and thereafter flows in a partially ruined conduit across the ancient city. This and the sulphur-spring already described are, so far as I was able to discover, the only sources of water-supply possessed either by the Tadmor of to-day or by the Palmyra of long ago.

Six hours marching brought us to Ain-el-Beda, a deep well overlooked by a small Turkish guard-house. Here an evil-looking lot of Arabs were busily drawing

water, among them some negroes whom we took to be slaves. Several women were included in the party, and with them we entered into free converse, apparently only to the amusement of the men, who showed no objection to our discussing even such a debatable subject as matrimony. One woman invited me with considerable cordiality to return with her to camp, with the openly expressed object of giving me a trial as a husband. The only polite way of declining this explicit offer was to plead four wives already anxiously awaiting my arrival at Damascus. I would have pleaded forty if necessary, or even acclaimed the Christian Lady as my one and only lawful spouse, to escape the adventure proposed; for the woman, though youngish and not unattractive, was a hard-mouthed harridan that I felt sure had led many a husband before a lurid life. She went off with her water-laden camels and donkeys, however, and amicably continued to wave her hand to me until her party was lost to sight in a fold of the desert.

Meanwhile we had entered into negotiation with the corporal in charge of the guard-house for an escort to Homs. This gentleman with considerable impertinence declined to comply with our wishes, and when we explained that the *mudir* at Palmyra had said we would find men here to take us to Homs, he triumphantly announced to an interested throng that he cared nothing for the *mudir*, and that if sixty-six *begs* like us wanted an escort to Homs he would refuse. We threatened to report him, and even to go back to Palmyra to complain in person, but he merely laughed in our faces. With such a personage nothing was to be done, and we cast about for a guide among the Arabs drawing water from the well. Several were willing enough to go, but the risk of trusting



them seemed too great; they were potential robbers to a man. At this juncture a person in the uniform of a *zaptieh* signified his willingness to accompany us, and explained that he had recently brought the post from Homs and was shortly returning thither. He would show us the way, and where to get water, but would take no responsibility for our safety. Moreover, he wanted quite a large sum for his services. Having already been told by the corporal that there was no water to be found on the way to Homs, and that there was no road of any kind, we suspected a trick to extract money, and declined the offer. After all, there was no particular object in going to Homs, for we discovered that the first forty miles of the Damascus route followed the same plain, while the character of the country was identical. Accordingly we decided to follow the Damascus road until near the Anti-Lebanon, when it would be possible again to find a suitable diversion to Homs. And so we requested the corporal to furnish us with an escort to continue along the regular route, and to replace the two men returning to Palmyra.

An instructive scene followed. The corporal told one of his men to get ready, and met with a flat denial. A violent quarrel ensued between the man and his superior, and seldom though Oriental fury is translated into action, on this occasion I surely thought blood would be shed. Nothing would have given us greater pleasure than to witness the defeat of the corporal, for a more arrogant fellow I had never before encountered. But we were disappointed, for, after a period of unseemly wrangling, the man gave in and sulkily went off to saddle his horse. When he was ready we started, and it then appeared that his companion was no other than the *zaptieh* who had offered to guide us to Homs! This rascal had declared himself on post



duty from Homs, and not connected with the guard-house at Ain-el-Beda at all. Yet it now appeared that he was not only regularly attached at Ain-el-Beda, but that he was first on the roster for duty. So not only had our friend the corporal been grossly impertinent, but he had impudently endeavoured to swindle us by representing one of his men as an independent guide. So much for discipline at the post of Ain-el-Beda. We were to have further experience of it later on, in a manner that might have cost us extremely dear.

We set forth westward across the desert with the intention of marching for eight hours and then halting beside a particular well. Near nightfall our escort protested against proceeding, on the ground that there was no water in the well for which we were bound, and that it would be much better to halt for the night at an Arab encampment visible in the distance. All the muleteers prayed that we might stop, as their beasts were tired after twelve hours' marching that day, and because hospitality for man and beast could be obtained from the Arabs, while otherwise we should have to bivouac in the open desert. This proposal appearing reasonable we made a diversion to the south, and just at dark reached a collection of black Arab tents, where the Sheikh agreed to give us shelter for the night. It was pretty poor shelter, for the long tent in which we were allotted room was open altogether on one side and extremely ragged on the other, while the top was rent in so many places that the view of the sky was almost uninterrupted. Fortunately the night was fine, and there was no discomfort to distract one's attention from the picturesqueness of the scene presented before us.

A fire of camel thorn flamed in the middle of the tent, and around sat a few Arabs in solemn dignity,

waiting for the coffee that a white-bearded patriarch was preparing with calculated deliberation. From a bag he first produced the beans, and then a carefully measured handful was spread upon an iron shovel balanced over the embers. The beans were subjected to much turning and shaking, and in due time were thrust into a tall mortar made of hollow bamboo, where they were rattled and pounded into powder. Then the boiling, then the bitter drinking in tiny sips. Nastier stuff than Arab coffee I am sure does not exist outside a chemist's shop. And if I misliked the brew of the old Sheikh, I am sure that he thought that of Shamu, made in Turkish style with sugar, but poor stuff. But the Arabs were more than content with their own, and a few cigarettes that we gave them, passed from mouth to mouth, and finally, two-thirds smoked, handed over the reed screen dividing us from the women, filled their souls with peace. They soon curled themselves up in their abbas and went off to sleep around the blackened hole in the ground that did duty for a fire-place. After our long and wearisome day we were glad to follow their example, and with the comfortable noises of the flocks resting around the tent in our ears, and the sweetness of the desert air in our nostrils, we were quickly in the far land where even the wicked cease from troubling.

Morning came all too soon, for Shamu had us up and doing three hours before the sun. The women of the encampment were before us, however, and while we waited for the muleteers to load up, we went and talked to three or four that were busy making butter at the farther end of the tent. The milk was in sheepskins that lay on the ground, and their task was the rolling backward and forward of these wet and gurgling receptacles until the process was complete.

Library of  
California



TO MY  
MILLY  
AND LILLY



*Arab Girls.*



A little mild flirtation was not at all incompatible with this occupation, and for the second time in twenty-four hours I put away from me the offer of a desert bride. This one pretended to be sadly wounded in her affections, and lamented her fate in a mournful song that excited the laughter of her companions, and made even old Shamu grunt with appreciation. The lady appeared to be picturing to herself a grassy plain where sheep and camels feasted royally, and where she herself sat within the tent surrounded by golden-headed cherubs—it was here they all laughed, for the song related how the hard-heartedness of a ruddy-faced stranger dispelled this delightful vision.

For nearly two hours we marched by moonlight across the lonely wastes of the Syrian desert, seeing neither man nor beast. In due course the sun arose, and with it came a terrible wind from the snows of the Lebanon. During the morning we passed the solitary ruin of Kasr-el-Her, a remnant of a great Roman building placed alone on the highway to Palmyra. The Arabs have made a curious use of its ancient wall, for it bears innumerable marks of a hieroglyphic character that neither Fowle nor I could make head or tail of. Some were new and some very old, but none bore any resemblance to any sort of writing that we had ever seen. It was only on arrival in Damascus that we discovered that these were tribal *wusms*, or brands, used to mark the flocks of different tribes and families. Every group of Bedouins has its own *wusms*, and here is the place of registration, where all the world may learn that sheep and camels so marked belong to such and such people.

Fowle and I lingered at this local Somerset House for a while and allowed our escort to get a little in front. Not long afterwards, however, we had almost

overtaken the caravan, pounding away in the penetrating and violent wind that swept over the desert. We supposed that the *zaptiehs* were marching in the group ahead of us, which consisted of six muleteers and servants, two men with donkeys who had joined themselves to us for the sake of security, and the Christian Lady and her nephew. The *zaptiehs* had given us a good deal of trouble the night before, demanding food for themselves and their horses, or money in lieu thereof. As these matters were their own concern we had declined compliance, all the more so that they had been parties to the attempt to overreach us at Ain-el-Beda. At midday Fowle had joined the caravan, and was walking for exercise, while his horse ran loose among the others. I was riding about 200 yards behind, struggling with the wind that forced one to keep one's head down to protect the eyes from the dust.

Suddenly, I observed three men without the cloaks invariably worn by Arabs running out of the desert towards the caravan. It was not unusual for Bedouins tending flocks near the road to come up to us to ask for news, and perhaps to beg for a cigarette; and although I thought their manner of appearance on this occasion rather strange, I never supposed that unarmed men, as these apparently were, would approach so large a party, including two soldiers, with other than peaceable intentions. Nevertheless the circumstance was exceptional enough to attract attention, and I watched to see what would occur when they reached the caravan. The men disappeared among the cluster of animals, and nothing seemed to happen for a moment; then, all at once, the group opened out, garments began to flutter, and it became obvious that a stampede was taking place.



I immediately jogged my beast, and was about to canter forward when Fowle and Shamu appeared separately from the others and mixed up with the three strangers. Fowle was shouting to me, with both arms stretched high in the air, while Shamu was furiously gesticulating and pointing his hand insistently to the left of the road. At that moment I saw the light gleam on what I supposed was the barrel of a rifle—it turned out to be a sword—and in the confusion of the moment thought it was a case of “hands up” with Fowle at the threat of being shot. Shamu’s demand that I should ride off the road, however, was clear enough, and I quickly started my horse off at a gallop to get round the robbers, as, obviously, they had now shown themselves to be. What I expected occurred at once, for a shot rang clear and loud, and a white puff of smoke floated swiftly away from one of the Arabs. Instinctively I squirmed to feel if I had been struck, but could detect no indication of a wound. Then a second report reverberated through the air, and this time I saw the bullet dust up the ground nearly twenty yards away from me. It was obvious that they were shooting at me, but that their practice was pretty poor. I was now at right angles to the group on the road, and only a hundred yards off. Several shots rang out in quick succession, and then I realised that Fowle was defending himself with his revolver, and between shots shouting to me to come up. I soon had my beast going in the direction of the fight, and when close by dismounted to get my pistol out. Encumbered with coat and thick gloves, already numbed with cold, and with two hands that in consequence of a similar adventure two years before were very clumsy in an emergency, I had difficulty in bringing my weapon into action. The robbers appeared to have left Fowle at my approach,

and were standing a little way off, one brandishing a sword and another holding a large nickel-plated revolver. My first shot settled their doubts, and they turned to run. I think it was my third that brought one of them down on his knee and made all four stop. But the man I had wounded got up, and, holding his arm, resumed running, and I had the pleasure of loosing off the whole of the nine cartridges contained in my little automatic. Unluckily the bore was small, and the fugitives were quickly out of range, or I might have done more execution. I saw most of my bullets strike the ground right in line, but I always hope that two, which gave no sign of reaching earth, found a lodgment in Arab flesh. Although too small to bring a man down, unless striking in a vital place, they were quite big enough to make a wound that would stay, and I think the gentlemen of the road got fright enough to make them careful for some time to come.

The robbers gone, I found Fowle feeling his wrist and wondering how much damage had been done by a blow from a stick. Shamu was rubbing the blood off his neck from a wound inflicted by a stone. Neither was hurt, but Fowle had had a narrow escape, for three shots had been fired at him from a range of a few yards. He had fired four times at his assailants from an equally short distance and had struck one in the shoulder. His revolver was then empty and he was at the mercy of the robbers, when fortunately my appearance put a different complexion on the affair. As there were many Arab encampments in the mountains to the south, we used all speed in fixing up our horses and starting after the caravan, now lost to view in front. There was every possibility that our recent visitors, whom we could see trotting slowly away in the distance, would rouse



their friends and bring a band of properly armed horsemen down upon us.

When we were all mounted and fairly going, the details of the encounter were related to me, and I realised that I was fairly lucky myself in having escaped a danger of which I had not been aware. When the three robbers reached the caravan they roughly demanded bread, being denied which they produced their weapons, and each laid hold of a horse's bridle. One of these was the Christian Lady's, and she with great spirit cursed the aggressor in her best Arabic, and beat him over the head with the end of a rope. He let go. Another was that of the horse ridden by Fowle's Mohammedan servant, but he jumped off and ran away, leaving the beast in the robber's possession. Fowle now realising the situation—in the high wind, and with the caravan straggling over a considerable distance it did not at once become apparent to all concerned what was happening—ran to his horse and got his revolver out of the saddle-bag. He rushed towards the man who had taken his servant's animal, and caught the bridle from him, the assailants apparently being surprised by his sudden appearance. Meanwhile the rest of the caravan, with the honourable exception of Shamu, bolted for all they were worth, leaving Fowle and Shamu and the three robbers alone in the road. This was the situation when I, from the rear, began to realise that there was trouble. Fowle standing at bay, revolver in hand, before one man armed with a large revolver, a negro with a long sword, and another with an Arab bludgeon, now began shouting and signalling to me to get my pistol out and to come up and take the robbers in rear. Unfortunately he was so mixed up with his assailants that I did not



understand his wishes, while Shamu, standing somewhat to the side, was vigorously signalling to me to ride round. No actual attack had been made so far, but when I obeyed Shamu's signals, the man with the revolver, supposing I was running away, fired two shots at me to put hurry into my movements, whereafter, thinking there was nothing to be apprehended from me, they set about Fowle and Shamu. A fourth man had now appeared on the scene. This rascal, it seems, had been stalking me from behind, and would have knocked me on the head if, at the critical moment, and unwitting of his presence, I had not bolted off the road. This man then ran to join his companions and to assist in the robbery. All four went for Fowle with stones and the bludgeons. When he fired his revolver at them in self-defence, one man returned the fire, shooting thrice, mercifully without result. Having only four cartridges, Fowle was soon defenceless, and would probably have been killed but for my appearance. As Arabs have considerable respect for a mounted man, they held back for a moment to see what I was going to do, and when the little pistol began talking they thought it time to go, particularly as one of their number was already wounded by a bullet in the shoulder from Fowle's revolver. That Fowle had an extremely narrow escape was obvious, for, Shamu being an old man and practically incapable of active assistance, he was really alone and defenceless when, at his fifth shot at his assailants, the revolver only snapped. Shamu, however, had done excellent service, for his mere presence, together with the solemn warnings against interfering with Feringhis which he showered upon the robbers, probably did a good deal to delay their operations. Fortunately the old man had not suffered more for his faithfulness than being

twice struck by stones, at the throwing of which Bedouins are both expert and dangerous. It was curious that Shamu, only that very morning, had explained to us how he had made a hundred journeys with travellers in these regions during the last twenty years, and had never even had trouble with robbers. Indeed, we had been hearing so much about them, and had seen so little, that we had begun almost to disbelieve in them altogether. Fowle had given up carrying his revolver and only by chance had it in his saddle-bag. I, with a permanent reminder of such gentry, fortunately not only had my pistol in my pocket, but had it fully loaded, with a handful of cartridges to spare. That little weapon, indeed, alone saved us from disaster. When I reminded Shamu of what he had said in the morning about never having been bothered with robbers, all I could get out of him was—"Me and Muster Fowull give candle Church when come Damascus!"

An hour later we had overtaken the caravan, and were able to discharge ourselves of much sarcasm. I called up the head muleteer and said that I proposed to make them a present of two sheep, one for the quickest runner and one for the bravest. This man carried an Arab mace, a weapon not unlike an Irish shillelah, for at the end of a stick there is a large ball of hardened pitch, a touch of which cracks a skull. I suggested that his children should be told how splendidly their father had wielded the ancestral tomahawk, and that his village should be invited to make him Sheikh. Fowle said things to his servants that made them eat the ashes of repentance. Shamu spoke indiscriminately, and ended his observations with the remark that the Christian Lady was the only man amongst them. When we were tired expressing our-



selves, a more sick or more hang-dog looking party could not be imagined. Not only had they fled like a pack of sheep, but they had never once looked back to see what happened, or if we had been left helpless by the roadside.

As for our *zaptiehs*, they were far in front, neglectful of their duty. We had reason, too, to think them guilty of something worse, for there were various suspicious circumstances connected with the affair. To begin with, mere desert thieves, such as our assailants obviously were, would never have dared to attack a party containing two soldiers armed with rifles. With the escort out of sight there was nothing to deter them. At Ain-el-Beda the officer and his men had conspired to cheat us. At this place we had seen two negroes whom we were told were regular robbers drawing water with Arabs. On the way the *zaptiehs* had persuaded us to halt at a Bedouin encampment instead of at the point selected beforehand, and then the next morning they were conveniently absent when the robbers appeared. It looked, indeed, uncommonly like collusion, and as if the affair had been planned at Ain-el-Beda. Our theory is that the robbers followed us, stayed the night at the same encampment, and then in the morning skirted our course until the escort contrived to slip away in front, when they ran down upon us expecting to be able to do what they liked. When we overtook the *zaptiehs* several miles farther on, resting by the wayside, we took no notice of them, but they looked very foolish when the tale was related to them by the muleteers. They came very humbly and asked permission to go back and search for the robbers. What we replied is not fit for repetition in print.

Not long thereafter, and at the end of a very fatigu-



A large, complex diagram of a human brain, viewed from above, with numerous small circles and lines indicating neural connections and pathways. The diagram is divided into several sections, with some areas highlighted in black.

TO SIMU  
OF  
AMROHIA



*Syrian Children drawing water.*



*A little Syrian.*

ing and, but for the episode recounted, disagreeable march, lasting eleven hours, we entered the Syrian village of Jarietain and found ourselves in comparative civilisation. We had covered sixty-five miles in thirty-six hours, including stoppages, and were now out of the desert and within sight of the long-looked-for snow-clad range of the Anti-Lebanon.



## CHAPTER XXVIII.

## TURKISH AFFAIRS.

SYRIAN soil means civilisation of a kind, and having arrived where many feet have trod, and many pens scampered, I have obviously reached the point where my narrative of unsophisticated travel must cease. Before sketching—briefly, owing to the inordinate length to which this volume has already extended—some of the more prominent aspects of Turkish affairs, it remains for me, then, only to mention that my journey in the dominions of the Sultan brought me successively to Damascus, Beyrout, Smyrna, Constantinople, Salonica, and Uskub. My opportunities for observation thus extended from Turkish Arabia to Albania, and included centres representing problems and interests of most diversified character, and of extreme importance to the future of the Ottoman Empire. I should add, too, that although my travels ended in April, I have had the advantage, before writing this final chapter, of being able to follow Turkish doings during the ensuing five months.

It would be interesting to know if any Government that the world has seen has ever been confronted with so many problems as now confront the new Turkish Government. Their number is legion. When I was in

Baghdad in February there were no less than five distinct military expeditions in the field against refractory tribes, requirements that had reduced the garrison of the headquarters of the Sixth Army Corps from some thousands to as many hundreds, despite the fact that several battalions of reservists had been called out. The Muntefik Arabs were rebellious in the south-west of Mesopotamia, while the Beni Lams, who have recently fallen into the habit of attacking the Tigris steamers, required watching by a substantial force. Sheikh Barazani, near Mosul, had inflicted two defeats on Turkish forces in November and January, and retribution had not yet been dealt out. East of Baghdad fighting with the Hamawand Kurds was daily expected. On my way up the Euphrates I had myself seen Turkish troops engaged in operations against the Delaim Arabs. How these comparatively small matters have since fared I have no means of knowing, though it may be regarded as likely that any material alleviation of the situation in Turkish Arabia would be widely advertised, while the continuance of trouble would be sedulously kept in the background.

In Syria there is the Druse trouble, now reported aggravated by the participation of certain Arab tribes, and though there is a large force already in the field, reinforcements are being loudly demanded. Simultaneously there is war with the Shammar Arabs in Nedj, while the situation in the Yemen is entirely unsatisfactory. In European Turkey there have been 40,000 troops in the field at one time within the last three months to cope with the Albanian situation. Military strength is now being employed in Macedonia in ruthlessly enforcing the tyrannous decisions of the Court-martial, and there is here every prospect of a recrudescence in an aggravated form of the old

trouble with military bands. On the Greek frontier mobilisation on a considerable scale is reported. For military activity in time of peace this makes a record that would be pretty hard to beat.

Troubles of another kind are equally numerous. Demands for money in all directions are imperative. Reorganisation of every branch of the administration is a crying need. Anything in the shape of a system of national education on modern lines is totally non-existent, and will have to be built up from the very bottom. Justice has the advantage of codified law, but suffers from the drawback of being served principally by persons of the old school so inadequately remunerated that they cannot live without bribes. Here the first essential is sufficient salaries, which shall obviate the necessity for devious methods. The telegraph service in some parts of Turkey is the worst in the world, as I have reason to know. Posts are so bad that foreign Powers maintain their own post-offices in most of the principal towns. To put these two services on a decent footing money is essential. The Treasury is so badly run that the French, in negotiating for a loan, stipulate for foreign control. Public Works is a department that is no department at all without money. There is talk of spending a million pounds on roads. Sir William Willcocks is crying out for money in Mesopotamia, and there are harbour works needed, and bridges galore. Army and navy are swamps that can absorb money in unlimited quantities, and still swallow more. There is a permanent annual deficiency of several millions sterling in the Turkish budget. Foreign loans may tide over the evil day, but the ultimate necessity is increased revenue. And that means one of two things, if not both — development of resources and increased taxation. Development of resources requires capital, at present



difficult to attract for a hundred reasons; while increased taxation,—well, that is perhaps the most difficult of all, for the truth is that the Revolution has been the work of a limited class acting through the army, and is looked upon partly with indifference, partly with suspicion, by an overwhelming majority of the population. Let the new Government, however, demand more money, and the indifference and suspicion will immediately change to enmity, active or passive according as the Government has the physical force to impose its will. Hence the necessity to spend money upon the army. Whereupon one realises that things in Turkey move in a vicious circle, whereof the centre, the radius, the diameter, the circumference and all pertaining thereto is money,—money to flow immediately, easily, plentifully, and continuously.

On yet another plane are a batch of questions of an intricate and embarrassing character. If the Young Turk had his heart's desire, it would be the abrogating of the Capitulations that confer extra territorial rights upon foreigners resident in Turkey. Europe, however, with one voice says no to this ambition, which must remain unreasonable while the administration of law in Turkey is a farce. But the ambition is there, and the situation rankles. There is the question of a further increase in the Customs duties. Great Britain, and supporting her are France and Russia, will not consent to this course while there is any possibility of the increase facilitating, directly or indirectly, the provision of funds for the Baghdad Railway as at present projected. Turkey needs the additional revenue badly; but our price, in effect, if not actually stated in words, is the placing of the whole Baghdad Railway question on a new footing, of which the principal feature would be internationalisation. Germany, on the other hand, grasps items of revenue, desperately needed for a

thousand other purposes, to meet the guarantees for her railway, and is utterly opposed to any alteration in the *status quo* which would affect her exclusive privileges. The Cretan question has been much to the fore of late. Small in itself it involves wide issues; the Protecting Powers—almost synonymous with the Triple *Entente*—impose upon Turkey an unwelcome restraint that tends to drive her into the camp of the Triple Alliance. For a country like Turkey definitely to take sides in European politics is a step of the gravest moment, and her statesmen begin to realise that such a policy must have awkward consequences. Bulgaria is a constant danger, for the moment aggravated by Turkish ill-treatment of Bulgarians in Macedonia; as a counterpoise some sort of an arrangement has been made with Rumania, a state intimately connected with the two principal parties to the Triple Alliance. Borrowing on a large scale is an immediate necessity, and here Turkey finds herself internationally involved. Her banker has hitherto been France. But France begins to tighten her purse-strings in view of the Turkish tendency towards the Triple Alliance. France has suddenly realised that the flotation of a large Hungarian loan in Paris is tantamount to putting a sword in the hands of her enemies whose military preparations compel her to spend more than half her revenue in defence. France has refused the loan to Hungary, and now appears to be applying the same principle to Turkey. It need not be discussed here whether the French are wise, or unwise, thus to mix politics and finance; but their doing so brings home to Turkey that she cannot play the German game with French money. One of the most interesting developments of the future, therefore, will be the effect of this discovery upon Turkish policy.



It is one of the great and pressing questions which Turkish statesmen have to consider—whether it will pay them better to keep on terms with the only two countries in the world, France and ourselves, who have large surplus funds for investment; or unreservedly to throw themselves into the arms of the most powerful military combination in Europe. As regards foreign policy, then, Turkey may be regarded as having her hands full.

Internal questions of a less pressing character are numerous. The extraordinary variety of races within the Turkish Empire, speaking different languages, using different forms of writing, and professing different religions, makes the task of evolving a common nationality one of remarkable perplexity. Ideals of existence differ in each region, and what suits one community is anathema to another. Moreover, the Turks are hated from Albania to Arabia, and proposals emanating from Constantinople are frequently viewed with suspicion and dislike. Nevertheless, the avowed object of the new *régime* is the Ottomanisation of the whole. There is the question of military service by non-Moslems, a proposed departure viewed in many quarters with deep disapproval, as tending to a lessening of Mussulman supremacy in the state. There are broad lines of policy in regard to economic development to be decided upon. Is it to be Turkey for the Turks, or are foreign enterprise and capital to be permitted freely to exploit the resources of the Empire? There is emigration to be stopped, and immigration to be encouraged, that the enormous waste regions of Turkey shall be populated. There is, indeed, no end to the broad questions, and their innumerable subdivisions, which concern present-day Turkish statesmen; the Government that could deal with all successfully would



be more than human. Mistakes are inevitable, and the best that can be expected is a balance of well-doing that will outweigh the errors.

Such, roughly and briefly, being the position, one turns with interest to the record of the Young Turkish party which effected the Revolution, and which is now responsible for the government of the country. The *coup d'état* which resulted in the wresting of a Constitution from Abdul Hamid was a masterly effort, while the sequel, which ended in the deposition of the Sultan, was an affair in which the leaders showed ability and promptitude. The character and resolution actuating the Young Turks have led Europeans to place a very different value upon their aspirations as compared with those of the Young Persians. Where the Persians, without initiative or any marked enthusiasm, had been helped from outside to effect change, and were protected meanwhile from their own Government, the Turks matured their plans under the nose of a Sultan served by an immense organisation of spies and supported by a large army, and effected their purpose unaided when the moment came. They took the greatest possible risks during preparation, and showed extreme courage in execution. Not only, then, were there behind the Turkish movement ardent spirit and definite aims, but there existed soil far more ready for the reception of Western ideas of government than could be found in Persia. Thus where the Persian Revolution left Europe cold, events in Turkey provoked enthusiasm and deep sympathy in all quarters where the advancement of mankind is an ideal of existence.

In England in particular the Turkish Revolution was warmly received, partly because it implied a compliment to the result of our own political evolution, and

partly from our innate admiration for the qualities displayed by the principal actors—enterprise, courage, and moderation. So much for sentiment. In more material aspects there was solid satisfaction in the course of events. Any change in the system of government which would lead to the formation of a strong and independent Turkey was welcome to us from the point of view of Mediterranean strategy; while reformation in Turkey itself, whose principal commercial client we are, could only lead to economic development and a larger market for our industrial products. To round off the situation there was the pleasant knowledge that the Young Turks were full of admiration for British institutions, British ideals, and British people, and that they freely attributed their inspiration to the example of England. Manifestations of their feelings towards us were numerous and sincere, and for the time we held the supreme place in the Turkish heart.

Such was the aspect of affairs when I reached Constantinople immediately after the Revolution. Eighteen months later I once more set foot on Turkish soil, and have since, as already observed, seen something of the country from the Persian Gulf to the extreme northwest. Starting with Baghdad, whose affairs I have already discussed, one is here confronted with considerable evidence of the unpopularity of the new *régime*. While the town Arabs are merely suspicious of the change, those outside are inimical. Tribal Arabs are usually content to look no further than their own Sheikh, and to concern themselves only in domestic politics. But where religion is involved they become interested in wider issues, and the present situation has undoubtedly attracted their attention. To what extent the disturbed condition of Mesopotamia is a reflection of the feeling that recent events are a



menace to Islam is difficult to estimate. What does seem clear is that the Arabs of Turkish Arabia are in sympathy with the whole of Arabia in regarding the new order with suspicion and dislike. It hardly seems possible that Arab opposition should ever be translated into action outside Arab spheres, but tactless handling of the situation by the Government might very well lead to a general movement seriously threatening Turkish predominance.

Damascus indicated a similar frame of mind on the part of the adjacent Arab tribes, who were said to be in a state of smouldering revolt, which has since developed into the Druse outbreak. So far as the Syrian tribes are concerned, however, I am informed that they are opposed not so much to the constitutional idea as to the individuals behind the present Government, whom they believe to be no better than the *camarilla* that formerly exploited the country through Abdul Hamid. In this respect tribal opinion is largely shared by the inhabitants of Damascus, the latter loudly declaring that the administration of justice is just as rotten as before, while the old evils, in the shape of bribery and corruption, are just as prevalent. Damascus, however, as well as all Syria, has special grievances against the present Government which tend possibly to give birth to uncharitable views of the situation. Arabic is the language of the whole of Syria, Moslems, Jews, and Christians alike regarding it as their mother-tongue. The large majority, of course, are Moslem, to whom the language of the Prophet is a sacred thing. Nevertheless, it is the admitted aim of the Young Turkish Government to make Turkish the official language—as it partially is at present—not only as regards the administration, but in respect of public instruction. Not only, then, is this



policy of making the Turkish language predominant repulsive to the Moslems for sentimental reasons, but it strikes at all sections of the population, for Turkish is as much a foreign language in Syria as English is in India. It is customarily spoken only by officials, beyond whom the number of people to whom it is familiar is practically *nil*. No steps as regards the language question have yet been taken in Syria, but should the Government, in pursuance of its understood intentions, adopt a positive policy, a storm of protest will be raised. Other matters in which Syrian Arabs are interested are their representation in Parliament, and the appointment of their fellow-countrymen to official posts in Syria. As regards the former, there is the complaint that the prosperous Arab community has not been given a proportionate number of Parliamentary deputies, by which they are deprived of the weight they ought to possess in the national counsels. Furthermore, they are aggrieved because Arabic Syria is administered almost entirely by Turkish officials, who do not know their language, and who are out of sympathy with their needs. In this respect they regard themselves as worse off than in the days of Abdul Hamid, who largely employed Arabs both in Constantinople and in the provinces. Nowadays the Syrians generally find little improvement in the methods of government, and at the same time observe an unexpected high-handedness, which they deeply resent as being at variance with the new doctrine of self-government, which they have accepted, more or less, because it promised them relief from the tyranny of Constantinople and a voice in their own affairs.

Beyrout, Smyrna, Constantinople, and Salonica all had the same tale to tell in regard to the prevalence of ancient evils. The bakshish system had its merits, so

far as the ordinary operations of trade are concerned, for small payments openly made in recognised directions took immediate effect. Open bribery is now abolished, and its place has been taken by a variety of passive obstruction that embarrasses enterprise of all kinds. The bribery is not cured. It has merely sunk deeper into the system. It is now much more difficult to effect, and a very great deal more expensive. In conversation with both foreigners and Turkish subjects I have frequently heard the passing of the "good old days" deplored. This view, of course, does some injustice to the parties now responsible for the government of Turkey. It is justifiable in regard to the administration of the law and the continued prevalence of corrupt methods, but hardly so in the implication that the Young Turkish leaders approve and countenance irregularity. The Government in Constantinople would give a great deal to establish a perfect administrative machine, free from all the old evils, and working with the smoothness of the more highly organised systems of western Europe. But the trouble is that the instruments to effect this desirable end are extraordinarily difficult to procure. The number of Young Turks whose patriotism is of the kind that puts country before self, and who have adopted high ideals of integrity to the exclusion of the predatory impulses natural in persons nurtured under an Oriental *régime* of the old-fashioned kind, is extremely limited, and there are certainly not enough to go round the immense number of responsible posts to be found in an Empire numbering twenty-five million souls. It happens, therefore, that the second-best must be employed in all directions, and the truth is that these second-besters, loudly though they shout the shibboleths of western democracy, remain just the



same unregenerate old Turks in whose blood is the instinct to profit by opportunity regardless of the public interest. Turn them out the Government cannot, for outside the bureaucratic class there are practically none—except Christians, who are impossible in a Moslem country—sufficiently educated to hold office.

Whatever the Turks may be doing, or omitting to do, in other branches of the public service, they are evidently making a whole-hearted endeavour to put the army on a better footing. Wherever one goes there is remarkable improvement visible in the appearance and bearing of the troops. Uniforms are new, arms are clean, horses are of a better stamp. Range-firing has become a regular practice, where at one time it was more apparent in the breach than in the observance. Field exercises are regularly prescribed, and a garrison-town in these days gives an impression of military activity strangely in contrast with the slovenliness and laziness of the past. At the same time the impression is left upon one that the Turkish idea of military efficiency still remains to some extent the old Oriental one that equipment is the first essential, and that the actual preparation for warfare is a matter best left with Providence. Here, again, one fully acquits the military authorities at the capital of not being thoroughly alive to the real needs of the army. The officers trained in the school of Von der Goltz have little to learn of modern military requirements, but they are confronted with an organisation in which many of the junior officers are elderly men of the old-fashioned kind, innocent of the science of their business, and to a great extent too old to learn. Tactical training can only be carried out by regimental officers, and if they are ignorant the troops



must lag behind until the process of re-officering with men educated in the military schools is complete. Even then the Turkish army must be at a disadvantage, for the standard of knowledge and intelligence among the classes which furnish officers must remain comparatively low for at least a generation or two, while the quality of the education itself must continue for a long time to come inferior to that available in Europe. Admitting the soldierly qualities of the Turk, it cannot be overlooked, when warfare has become to a great extent a scientific game, that personal bravery must be supplemented by general knowledge. In that respect the Turkish army is far behind the Japanese, both as regards officers and men, and there can be no question of comparison between the two until education in Turkey has become as universal as it is in Japan. Probably seven-eighths of the rank-and-file of the Turkish army are illiterate, while perhaps half of the officers have only just learnt to read and write in the ordinary religious schools.

When one has said that the Young Turks have contrived to keep the ship of state afloat, one has said a good deal for them. To inherit the kingdom of Abdul Hamid, and to maintain the inheritance almost intact, is alone a remarkable achievement. It must not be overlooked, however, that they have embroiled themselves in various directions, and sown seeds that may bear dangerous fruit. One thing they have done that may not prove to their advantage—they have turned their faces away from their British friends. It would be difficult to say exactly when the change began to manifest itself, but probably the earliest tangible symptom was the quashing of the scheme for the fusion of the Turkish and British steamer lines on the Tigris, a project strongly supported by our

Foreign Office. This has been followed by hostile treatment of other British enterprises. Moreover, British susceptibilities in other directions have met with scant regard. There have been cases in Constantinople and in the provinces where flagrant breaches of the Capitulations have occurred, in some of which no apology has been tendered for cavalier treatment. My own experiences were not particularly happy, for when Lieutenant Fowle and I arrived at Damascus, after being murderously attacked in the desert when under Government protection, and in circumstances that called for immediate investigation, the authorities neither expressed regret at the occurrence, nor took any steps, so far as I have ever been able to discover, to punish our assailants or the gendarmes who neglected their duty. Other British travellers who have recently suffered outrage and robbery in the neighbourhood of Damascus have had a similar experience. Indeed a good deal has happened to suggest that the respect and esteem of earlier days have diminished. But it is not so much by tangible instances that Turkish feelings are manifested, for all foreigners have suffered to some extent from the swollen heads upon which responsibility in many cases now devolves, but rather in our loss of influence with the Government, and in the steady trend of Turkey towards the camp of our political opponents in Europe. Prior to the Revolution Turkey was completely in the German pocket, and British influence in Constantinople was *nil*. That situation was the logical result of a line of policy initiated by Mr Gladstone after the occupation of Egypt; and, rightly or wrongly, we had created it ourselves. The Revolution, and the liberal ideas that fostered it, put the friends of Abdul Hamid in



the shade, and brought his constant critics, ourselves to wit, to the front as an example and inspiration for Young Turkey to follow. Once more, without any effort on our part, we were supreme in the Turkish heart, as we had been when the arrival of our fleet in the Bosphorus saved Constantinople from the Russian army. Yet within the space of a score of months we have contrived again to lose our place in Turkish affections; while our great European rival, who alone stood by Abdul Hamid when all the world pointed the finger of horror at him, and who sacrificed her political dignity for commercial concessions, is become the respected mentor and trusted friend of Abdul Hamid's destroyers. Even the German ally, who dealt so bitter a blow to Young Turkish vanity by the formal annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and by her encouragement to the Bulgarians likewise to violate the terms of the Treaty of Berlin at the expense of Turkey, is now being forgiven and looked upon with shining eyes, just because she is the inseparable associate of Germany. Such is the curious *volte-face* which Europe has recently witnessed. What is interesting from the British point of view is—why British statesmanship has lost the goodwill of a country which it is certainly to our interest to keep out of the opposing scale in the balance of European power, and whose economic development promised us an honest opportunity to increase our commercial activity.

The subject of Turkish leanings towards the Triple Alliance has been very much to the fore during this summer, and while abundant evidence of this tendency may be derived from the Constantinople Press, and from the private conversation of representative Turks, the principal expression of the belief that Turkish political sympathies are with Central Europe is to be found in



the effect created thereby in France. The French have immense investments in Turkish stock and in enterprise in Turkey, three or four times as great as either Germany or ourselves, and it is obviously to her interest to keep Turkey within her own orbit. The fact that she is being compelled to adopt a new attitude is highly significant of where Turkey is drifting. In the negotiations for a Turkish loan in Paris now proceeding, the French ask for certain administrative guarantees to ensure payment of interest, and further stipulate for expenditure of a large portion of the money lent in purchases that will benefit French industry. The terms are meant to be stringent, for France clearly does not intend that her money shall go towards the promotion of German industry, or to support the pro-German Chauvinism that is now so prevalent in Turkey. France is our ally, firmly bound to us, as we are to her, by mutual interest. Turkey cannot cool towards one and not to the other. The French have faithfully stood by us in regard to the question of the financing of the Baghdad Railway—the flotation of the second instalment of Bonds has been a failure, with the result that there are practically no funds to continue the building of the second and third sections of the railway—and we are supporting her in the financial negotiations with Turkey. That Turkey chooses to show coolness to the two countries in the world most able to help her is indicative of the powerful influences at work. Germany has worked tooth and nail to recover the ascendancy over Turkey which she possessed in Abdul Hamid's time, and the Turkish attitude towards England and France proves how successful she has been.

It is said in some quarters that we are responsible for this situation, because, when the Young Turks in

the early days of the Revolution were as wax in our hands, we failed to mould them. Unquestionably one section of them would have proved plastic in our hands, though it is highly probable that another was possessed of predetermined ideas which no influence of ours would have altered. Time has developed these ideas and shown us what to expect from the new rulers of Turkey. They aim principally at the Ottomanisation of the Empire. That is to say, they wish Albanians, Armenians, Jews, Greeks, Arabs, Syrians, Kurds, and all the nationalities of Macedonia, to sink their respective national individualities into one single nationality—which shall have for its principal element the Young Turk himself—for choice speaking the Turkish language, and using the Arabic alphabet, the only form of writing in which the Turkish language is ever expressed. In this way alone do they perceive the possibility of making Turkey strong and powerful. And as they are at the present moment in control of the army through which the Revolution was effected, they propose to use force to accomplish this purpose. Turkey once united, and her army reorganised, then let those Balkan states which have been broken piecemeal from the Ottoman Empire have a care. Let everybody have a care, for the Turk will then be as good as anybody else in Europe or Asia.

That is not a spirit which we welcome in Turkey. We hoped to see an ardent effort towards internal reform, practical measures for economic development, the establishment of security, equal liberty for all creeds and races, generally a process of reformation which should build up a new Turkey on a sound foundation of community of interest and of mutual consideration between all elements of the population. Towards none of those ends can it be said that

material progress has been made. Nor can that cause surprise when we realise the herculean nature of the task, complicated from within and without, which presents itself. It is a task that might well daunt more experienced statesmen than Turkey yet possesses; and although we may disapprove the manner, we can but admire the high courage with which they have approached it. Nevertheless, it must be recognised that the needs of the army have been allowed to eclipse all others, with the result that Turkey remains very much where she was. The destinies of the Empire are now controlled by a small coterie whose patriotism is undoubted, and whose aims at least are far above those of the old *camarilla*. There is the disadvantage, however, that many of the newcomers are ignorant of affairs, are without any particular stake in the country, and are consequently comparatively irresponsible.

So much for the military section of the Committee of Union and Progress, in whose hands the sole direction of affairs now lies. Besides the soldiers there is a civilian element in the Committee, in the Government, and in the Assembly, which is far from satisfied with the outlook. This element is composed to some extent of educated and informed men who emphatically disagree with this policy of putting the cart before the horse, of planning great things without a foundation of prosperity. But sober people of this kind have no power, and if they raise their voices in protest they are apt to disappear quite in the old Hamidian manner—witness the recent murder of a journalist whose opinions were at variance with those of the present masters of the country. Superficially, Turkey, of course, is a constitutionally governed country, and the will of the majority ought to be law. But in reality the repre-



sentative principle is inoperative, and the Assembly a cipher. Even the Cabinet is powerless to act except according to the dictates of the military caucus, the very identity of the members of which is unknown to the public. In fact, there has been little change in the absolutist spirit of the Government; and though Nationalism is now the doctrine preached by the Young Turks, their ideas of its practice are so at variance with the conditions, so intrinsically dangerous, that the future can only be regarded with foreboding.

This attitude of Young Turkey which I have endeavoured to analyse has been arrived at slowly and almost imperceptibly. It has taken shape as British influence in Constantinople has waned and German ascendancy grown. The germs of Chauvinism are natural in an army that has achieved a *coup d'état*, and their development is only a question of a suitable medium. A British atmosphere in the Turkish capital would have killed them, hindered their growth at any rate. But—the atmosphere has been German, thinly so in the beginning, but daily increasing in density, until it completely superseded what in the air bore a British character. In this congenial medium the Chauvinistic germ has thriven and developed mightily, and to-day presents a healthy growth markedly characteristic of the environment in which it has been nourished. It is deeply tinged with German militarism, and imbued with the arrogance of brute force.

To what extent, if at all, this result is due to the ineptitude of British statesmanship I do not presume to say. But I do know that those Young Turks who take a sober view of the situation declare that if British sympathy and assistance had been what it might, German influence in Constantinople would never have become as powerful as it is. It is certainly the case

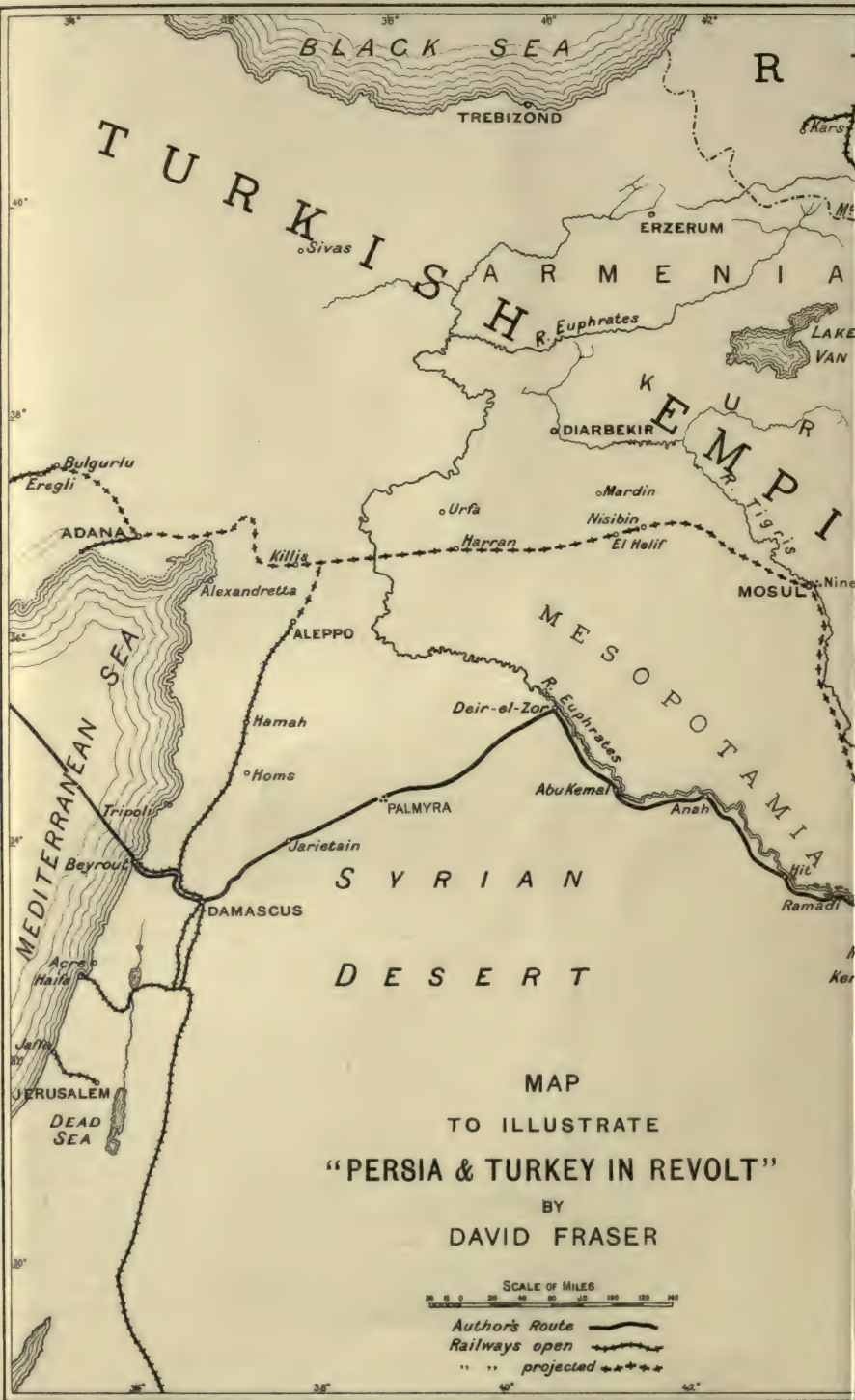
that Germany is represented in Turkey by one of the most remarkable diplomatists of the day, a man of extraordinarily adaptable character who is the idol of his own countrymen in Turkey and is now the trusted adviser of the Young Turks. Baron Marschall von Bieberstein's opinion is sought by them on all points, and his time is invariably at their disposal. It is to his skill and tact that Germany mainly owes the restoration of her influence in Turkey; though it must not be forgotten that military education on German lines by German officers has made the army sympathetic towards things German. We, on the other hand, have stood aloof, and have not endeavoured to identify ourselves with the aspirations of the new *régime*, though the unparalleled reception accorded to our Ambassador on his arrival in Constantinople gave us an unrivalled opportunity to do so. Possibly such a course would not have been in accordance with the traditions of British statesmanship. But Germany has thrown tradition to the winds, and is now reaping the benefit. There is another side to this question, and it is that Germany has had an axe to grind, and has ground it with uncommon skill, while we have proved our disinterestedness by our lofty indifference whether we pleased the Turks or not. It may be that we will come out top after all; but in the meantime we have the cold comfort of knowing that our superiority has distinctly helped to make Turkish policy the aggressive thing it is to-day.

*Note.*—Franco-Turkish negotiations for a loan having broken down in the end of October, Turkey is compelled to accept what limited financial assistance she can obtain from Berlin, and at whatever price Germany chooses to impose. While this course still

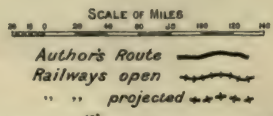
further widens the gulf between Turkey and the western Powers, it may in the end have a chastening effect, for the German money market cannot possibly supply the funds to pursue the military aggrandisement upon which Turkey for the moment would appear to be bent.







MAP  
TO ILLUSTRATE  
"PERSIA & TURKEY IN REVOLT"  
BY  
DAVID FRASER









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